NATION

Drones to be implemented to bolster maritime security

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'India to be biggest chip maker in 5 years'

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Lanning fashions DC's easy 25-run win over GG

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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INDIA bloc leaders sound poll bugle at Patna rally

Rahul said Centre is working for only two-three super-rich people

PATNA, 3 MARCH

Opposition bloc INDIA virtually sounded the bugle for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls on Sunday when top leaders, including Rahul Gandhi of the Congress, converged in the Bihar capital for a mammoth rally.

Former Congress president made a brief, about 15-minute-long, speech and charged the Narendra Modi government at the Centre with "working for only two-three super-rich people and neglecting Dalits and backward classes who comprise 73 per cent of the population".

AICC President, Mallikarjun Kharge, after whom the 'Jan Vishwas Maha Rally' was signed off by RJD President Lalu Prasad, lambasted Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for his recent volteface. Kumar played a key role in the formation of the INDIA bloc, though after returning to the NDA, he has been claiming that he was never happy with the way things moved forward in the Opposition coalition and that even the acronym did not have his approval.

The most caustic attacks on Kumar, however, came from Lalu Prasad, his arch-rival, who signed off his speech in style, asking the crowds to "be prepared for the upcoming elections. I will be there to boost your morale as you vote to drive out Prime Minister Narendra Modi from power at the Centre".

Known for pulling no punches, the RJD supremo said, "What can we do if Narendra Modi does not have a family of his own? He keeps bragging about the Ram temple. He is not even a true Hindu. In Hindu tradition, a son must get his head and beard shaved upon the demise of his parent. Modi did not do so when his mother died."

Also present at the rally was MV Shreyams Kumar, former Rajya Sabha member and RJD's Kerala unit Chief, who had flown down from the southern state.

Those who addressed the rally earlier included Samajwadi Party President and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, who said, "UP and Bihar together have 120 seats. If we ensure the BJP's rout in these two states, the party will not be able to form the government at the Centre."

Left leaders like Sitaram Yechury, D Raja and Dipankar Bhattacharya, general secretaries of CPI(M), CPI and CPI(ML) respectively, denounced the Narendra Modi government's policies, alleging these were only benefiting big businesses, even as they praised Tejashwi Yadav's emphasis on job creation. —PTI

RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav and other Opposition leaders during 'Jan Vishwas Rally', in Patna on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Over 650 roads closed in HP due to snow, rain

SHIMLA, 3 MARCH

An avalanche hit a village in Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh in the early hours of Sunday, obstructing the flow of the Chenab river and triggering an alert in the adjoining areas, officials said. Heavy snow and rainfall in the last two days have triggered more than half-a-dozen avalanches and landslides in Himachal Pradesh, leading to the closure of over 650 roads, including five national highways, they added. No casualty has so far been reported in any of the avalanches, the officials said. The flow of the Chenab was obstructed following an avalanche at the Dara waterfall near Jasrat village in Lahaul and Spiti. The district, located at a high altitude, reported heavy snowfall in the last 24 hours. The residents of the adjoining villages of Jobrang, Rapi, Jasrath, Tarand and Tharot have been advised to stay cautious and inform the nearest police post in case of an emergency, Superintendent of Police (SP), Lahaul and Spiti, Mayank Chaudhary said. —PTI

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PHOTO: PTI

Shehbaz Sharif becomes Pakistan's PM for the 2nd time

ISLAMABAD, 3 MARCH

Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday became the Prime Minister of Pakistan for a second time to lead a coalition government after he comfortably won a majority in the newly-elected Parliament amidst sloganeering by Opposition. Pakistan's newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday thanked his allies in the coalition government for putting their trust in him and making him Leader of the House. "When my Quaid (leader Nawaz) was elected the prime minister thrice, the development that followed in the country is an example of its own. And it is not wrong to say that Nawaz Sharif is the one who built Pakistan," Shehbaz said in his victory speech. —PTI

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LS poll: Cong to declare candidates soon

GWALIOR, 3 MAR

PHOTO: ANI

- MP Chief Minister Kamal Nath was present at a function organised in Morena on Saturday to welcome the entry of Rahul Gandhi's yatra in the state

Congress will announce its candidates for the Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh soon after the party's central election committee meeting to be held in four-five days, party general secretary Jitendra Singh said on Sunday.

Notably, BJP on Saturday announced the names for 24 out of the total 29 seats in MP. "The list of Congress (candidates) will be prepared soon. We take the decision in a democratic manner after consulting with committees at the block and district level, besides candidates of the state assembly election," Singh, Congress general secretary in-charge of party affairs in MP.

He said the party's central election committee (CEC) will meet in the next four-five days. "Soon after the CEC meeting, the list of the Congress candidates will be declared," Singh said in reply to a question.

On former MP Chief Minister Kamal Nath not present during the 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' here on Sunday, Singh said the senior Congress leader will rejoin the yatra in Ujjain as he had to leave for his sister's heart surgery.

Nath was present at a function organised in Morena on Saturday to welcome the entry of Rahul Gandhi's yatra in the state. Nath's son Nakul Nath is the Lok Sabha member from MP's Chhindwara constituency, the only seat which the Congress won in the 2019 general polls.

BJP is currently holding 28 out of the 29 seats in the state. —PTI

Will hand blast case to NIA if needed: K'taka CM

CHIKKAMAGALURU/ BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said that if necessary and the situation demands, the Rameshwaram Cafe explosion case will be handed over to the National Intelligence Agency (NIA).

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) has been entrusted with the explosion case and the investigation is going on and the suspect is yet to be traced, said Siddaramaiah in Chikkamagaluru.

Reacting to BJP's criticism that Brand Bengaluru is now Bomb Bengaluru, Siddaramaiah said, "What should be called for four bomb blasts since 2008. When a pressure cooker blast took place in Mangalore and an explosion right in front of the BJP office. What about those? BJP was in power then," the Chief Minister said. Regarding the illegal land encroachment around the Malenadu region, Siddaramaiah said that 25 tehsildars have been appointed and have reported that the matter is under review and they will speak to the Revenue Minister. Responding to the increasing cases of Monkey fever, the Chief Minister said, that he is planning to hold a meeting with Health Minister Dinesh Gundu rao to take the necessary action. About the upcoming Lok Sabha, Siddaramaiah said he is confident of winning 20 seats across the State. —PTI

>>>More on Page 2

The Central Crime Branch has been entrusted with the explosion case and the investigation is going on PHOTO: PTI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday announced that the preparations to accept lease applications for coffee estates in Malena duare in progress. Siddaramaiah said the government has made a decision and District Commissioners have been advised to form rules immediately. —PTI

Minister Dr Sharan Prakash Patil clarified that he did not speak lightly about the case of the explosion in Rameshwaram cafe after speculations that Patil spoke lightly about the blast. He said, "State BJP party is disappointed after losing the Assembly elections. BJP has joined in diverting some events. —Salar News

A SACRED DAY

Thai devotees pay respects to the Buddhist Holy Relics which travelled from India PHOTO: PTI

CUET-UG dates may be changed depending on LS polls schedule

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Schedule for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG is likely to be changed depending on the Lok Sabha elections schedule, according to UGC Chairman Jagadesh Kumar. National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday announced that the exam would be conducted from 15 to 31 May and the results declared on 30 June. India is gearing up for general elections to elect its 18th Lok Sabha, the schedule for which is likely to be announced this month.

"The dates announced by the NTA are tentative. Once the election dates are announced, the NTA will finalise the CUET-UG dates. The tentative schedule is from 15 May," University Grants Commission (UGC) chief Kumar said.

The application process for CUET-UG began on Tuesday and will conclude on 26 March. Introduced in 2022, the CUET-UG provides a single-window opportunity to students seeking admission in any of the central universities or other participating organisations, including state, deemed and private universities, across the country. —PTI

FARMER LEADERS GIVE 'RAIL ROKO' CALL FOR 10 MAR

CHANDIGARH, 3 MAR

Farmer leaders Sarwan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Sunday gave a call to the farmers across the nation to reach Delhi on 6 March for a protest while they also gave a four-hour 'rail roko' countrywide call for 10 March in support of their various demands. The two farmer leaders asserted that the farmers' ongoing agitation will be intensified at the existing protest points and will continue till their demands are met by the government. They were speaking in Bathinda district's Balloh village, the native village of a farmer who died recently during clashes with the Haryana security personnel in Khanauri.

Kisan Mazdoor Morcha are spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march by the farmers to press the government to accept their demands, which includes that the Centre should give a legal guarantee of the Minimum Support Price for the crops.

Both forums decided that while the farmers from Punjab and Haryana will continue to support the ongoing agitation at Shambhu and Khanauri border points, the farmers and farm labourers from other states should reach Delhi on 6 March for a protest. —PTI

Modi chairs brainstorming session over 'Viksit Bharat 2047' vision

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a day-long meeting of his Council of Ministers as they brainstormed over the vision document for "Viksit Bharat: 2047" and a detailed action plan for the next five years. Sources said a 100-day agenda for immediate steps to be taken after a new government is formed in May was deliberated upon during the meeting for its quick implementation.

Modi, they said, asked his ministerial colleagues to go all out to win people's support during the polls, as he spoke about numerous measures taken by his government to boost development and ensure welfare of all sections of society.

Government sources said the roadmap for "Viksit Bharat" is a result of more than two years of intensive preparation and involved a "whole of government" approach involving all ministries and wide-ranging consultations with state governments, academia, industry bodies, civil society, scientific organisations and mobilisation of youths for inputs. "More than 2,700 meetings, workshops and seminars were held at various levels. Suggestions of more than 20 lakh youths were received," one official said. The roadmap has a comprehensive blueprint with clearly articulated national vision, aspirations, goals and action points, the sources said, adding that its goals include areas such as economic growth, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ease of living, ease of doing business, infrastructure and social welfare. —PTI

Prime MInister Narendra Modi along with the council of ministers brainstorms the vision document for Viksit Bharat 2047 PHOTO: ANI

SUBMARINE HUNTING CHOPPER

Navy to commission MH 60R Seahawk copter

NEW DELHI, 3 MAR

The Indian Navy will commission on Wednesday in Kochi its newly-inducted MH 60R Seahawk multi-role choppers that it said would mark a "pivotal moment" in India's defence modernisation journey.

The commissioning of the helicopters in the INAS 334 squadron is expected to significantly enhance the Navy's operational capability in the Indian Ocean region which has been witnessing increasing Chinese military forays.

The US-manufactured MH 60R Seahawk is a maritime variant of the Blackhawk helicopter. The helicopter is designed for anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, search and rescue and medical evacuation among other operations.

"The advanced weapons, sensors and avionics suite make the Seahawks ideal for the Indian Navy's maritime security needs, offering enhanced capabilities for both conventional as well as asymmetric threats," the Navy said on Sunday. The Seahawks squadron will be commissioned in the Indian Navy as INAS 334.

India signed an agreement with the US for procurement of 24-MH 60Rs in February 2020 under the framework of foreign military sales. "The Seahawk's deployment in the Indian Ocean Region would strengthen the Indian Navy's maritime presence, dissuading potential threats and ensuring a secure and safe environment in this strategically crucial region," the Navy said.

"The commissioning of the Seahawks underscores the Indian Navy's steadfast dedication to fortifying maritime security, aligning seamlessly with the Government of India's visionary goal of ensuring security and growth for all in the region," it said.

The Navy said induction of the choppers is set to witness a significant surge in its maritime prowess. "The helicopter has been rigorously tested in Indian Reference Atmosphere (IRA) conditions and is fully integrated into the fleet," it said in a statement.

"The MH 60R helicopter would enhance India's blue-water capabilities, extending the operational reach of the Navy and supporting sustained naval operations across spectrums and over vast maritime domains," it said. —PTI

The US-manufactured MH 60R Seahawk is a maritime variant of the Blackhawk helicopter PHOTO: US NAVY

- The commissioning of the helicopters in the INAS 334 squadron is expected to significantly enhance the Navy's operational capability in the Indian Ocean region which has been witnessing increasing Chinese military forays

PHOTO: SALAR

Pulse polio campaign begins in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

The pulse polio campaign under Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Police jurisdiction was inaugurated on Sunday and will be conducted till 6 March. About 33,712 polio booths have been opened and 1,11,370 health workers are deployed. 963 mobile teams for door to door vaccination and 7,206 supervisors have been deployed to look over the campaign, according to the Health Department.Health Minister Dinesh Gundurao appealed to the parents of five year old children and below to get their children to participate in polio campaigns. "It is important that India should develop towards a polio free country in the future and hence I request everyone to get their children a polio vaccination without fail," he said.

Speaking at the event Naveen Bhatt, Director, National Health Mission, said that despite having booths arrangements for door to door vaccination administration has been arranged so that children do not miss being vaccinated. "Special priority is given to children of migrant community, high-risk and urban slums," said Bhatt.

The target is to vaccinate approximately 62 lakh children against polio, said the Health Department. Nearby Vaccination centre Karnataka android app can be downloaded to locate your nearest polio booth.

—Salar News

BJP MP Ramesh Jigajinagi hospitalised

BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

Senior BJP leader and Vijayapura MP Ramesh Jigajinagi, 71, was admitted to KLE Hospital in Belagavi on Sunday after he complained of chest pain. After the admission, the doctors found minor bleeding in the brain, and was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Later in the day, the hospital authorities informed the media that his condition was stable, however, they are still treating him in the ICU. The doctors also clarified that in his case, the chest pain was not an indication of a heart attack. Jigajinagi is a six-time MP and three-time MLA. *—Salar News*

Doctorate conferred on ex-CM, 3 others

MYSURU, 3 MARCH

At the 104th convocation of Mysore University, former chief minister SM Krishna, Cricket legend Javagal Srinath, Professor Dr Bhashyam Swamiji, and former minister MR Sitaram were conferred-with honorary doctorates with governor Thawar Chand Gehlot Gehlot expressing hope that their achievements would inspire future generations. . Addressing the gathering during the convocation Gehlot highlighted India's significant role in astronomy, geology, mathematics, medicine, and more, stating that this contribution holds immense importance for the world. At the convocation, "Our culture has always advocated for global brotherhood, peace, equality, and harmony. We must strive to develop an education system that integrates modern knowledge with these timeless values. We are committed to further strengthening our nation and addressing pressing global challenges, particularly environmental conservation" Gehlot emphasized. Gehlot praised the city's architectural marvels and its pivotal role as a centre of education in South India.

The ceremony was attended by Higher Education Minister Dr MC Sudhakar, retired director of Jayadeva Institute Dr CN Manjunath, Chancellor NK Loknath.

—Salar News

5 guarantees will continue: Shivakumar

Deputy Chief Minister said Congress party fights against poverty and not against the poor

BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

Five guarantee schemes will continue as long as Congress government is in power in the State, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Sunday.

Speaking after inaugurating various developmental works in Chikkamagaluru district, he said, "Congress party fights against poverty and not against the poor. No one can remove the guarantee schemes as long as Congress is in power."

Shivakumar said, "Karkala MLA and former BJP minister lauded the guarantee schemes saying it was making the lives of people better. Some other MLAs like Araga Jnanedra have criticised the scheme."

Shivakumar said, "If the Opposition parties have the courage, let them call upon their party workers to give up the guarantee scheme benefits. We will see how many of their party men give up the benefits."

While noting the Chikkamagaluru water development project under the Bhadra irrigation project, the Deputy Chief Minister said, "1.5 TMC of water has been allocated for them and Kadur taluks. A total of 244 tanks will receive water supply at an estimated cost of Rs 1,281 crores. Additionally, efforts are underway to provide water to 49,000 acres in Tarikere taluk, with completion nearing for Rs 812 crores. Drip irrigation projects covering 72,000 hectares in Kadur taluk are also in progress, with an investment of Rs 600 crore."

Shivakumar also questioned BJP's record in implementing welfare schemes comparable to Cong's promises ***PHOTO: ANI***

Furthermore, tenders for the Bhadra stage three and four projects, aimed at providing water to 70 tanks, will be issued by July. Despite assurances from the Centre to provide Rs 5,300 crore for the Upper Bhadra project, no funds have been released yet.

Regarding recent political developments, Shivakumar highlighted the failure of BJP-JD(S) alliance in the Rajya Sabha election despite alleged attempts to buy Congress MLAs. He noted contradictory statements from BJP State President Vijayendra and Congress leader Shamanur Shivashankarappa regarding MLA outreach. Shivakumar hinted at revealing a list of MLAs contacted by BJP and JD(S) leaders.

Asserting the difference between good and bad politics, Shivakumar questioned BJP's track record in implementing welfare schemes comparable to Congress guarantee schemes. He expressed gratitude to voters for their continued support and urged them to rally behind Congress in the upcoming general elections. Shivakumar noted that Veerendra Heggade of Dharmasthala has written a letter to the government saying devotees visiting the temple have gone up significantly.

—Salar News

VIKASIT BHARATH SANKALPA PATRA

BJP State President BY Vijayendra, Opposition leader R Ashoka with former Cricketer Venkatesh Prasad and others during the launch of 'Vikasit Bharath Sankalpa Patra', campaign in Bengaluru on Sunday ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Mysuru-Kodagu LS seat: Can Congress stage a comeback?

MYSURU, 3 MARCH

Mysuru-Kodagu Lok Sabha constituency comprises eight Assembly constituencies: Madikeri, Virajpet, Piriyapatnam, Hunsur, Chamundeshwari, Krishnaraja, Chamaraja and Narasimharaja. Congress has five seats among the eight, while JD(S) has two and BJP one.

Kisan Mazdoor Praja party represented the first MP from Mysore Lok Sabha constituency in 1952, with MS Gurupadaswamy clinching victory. In subsequent elections, Congress dominated with victories in 12 out of 17 contests, while BJP secured four wins. BJP established a foothold in the constituency for the first time in 1998. Congress' H Vishwanath emerged victorious in 2009 Lok Sabha elections, while BJP's Pratap Simmha secured wins in both the 2014 and 2019 polls. Presently, Simmha represents the constituency. Gurupadaswamy held ministerial portfolios at the Centre, including Petroleum Minister.

Following constituency re-organisation in 2008, Madikeri and Virajpet constituencies from Kodagu district were incorporated into Mysore Lok Sabha constituency, while KR Nagar was included in Mandya Lok Sabha constituency. Despite a host of development projects, MP Simmha has garnered attention for his controversial statements, sparking opposition within his party and from senior leaders.Simmha obstructed when former MLA Ramdas constructed a bus shelter, alleging it was in Gumbaj pattern. In the 2023 Assembly elections, it was alleged that Simmha played a role in BJP not giving tickets to Ramdas. Nanjangud MLA Harsh Vardhan clashed with Simmha during Covid-19. Simmha was accused of not supporting BJP candidates from Mysuru-Kodagu region in the last Assembly elections. Congress leaders demanded an investigation into allegations that Simmha allowed two individuals, who had jumped into the well of Lok Sabha from the observers' gallery and set off canisters during the last Winter Session, to escape.

Caste Matrix

In Mysuru-Kodagu Lok Sabha constituency, Vokkaliga community holds significant voting power, with Kuruba votes being decisive. The party that secures more votes from Dalit and backward communities is likely to win

Ticket Aspirants

Congress has 16 ticket aspirants, including former MLA H Vishwanath, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's son and former MLA Yatindra Siddaramaiah, KPCC Spokesperson M Laxman and District Congress President BJ Vijayakumar.

While Simmha is likely to be BJP candidate, JD(S) is vying for the seat in the wake of their alliance with BJP If the constituency goes to JD(S), former minister SR Mahesh is a frontrunner. *—Salar News*

RECENT RESULTS

2009: Congress candidate AH Vishwanath won by securing 3,54,280 votes by defeating BJP's CH Vijaya Shankar by 7,345 votes

2014: BJP candidate MP Pratap Simmha won by defeating Congress' H Vishwanath by more than 30,000 votes

2019: Simmha won by defeating Congress candidate CH Vijaya Shankar by a margin of 1.2 lakh votes

Caste Distribution

OBC - 4 lakhs

Vokkaligas -3.3 lakhs

Lingayats - 2.5 lakhs

SC/ST - 2.5 lakhs

Muslims -1.75 lakhs

Kurubas -1.5 lakh

Nayaks - 1 lakh

Others - 2 lakhs

No. of Voters

Total electorates: 18,73,063

Male - 9,36,743

Female - 9, 36,138

BENGALURU BOMB BLAST

BJP is trying to tarnish State's image, says DKS

BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar hit-out at BJP, accusing them of tarnishing Karnataka's image for their own political interests. Addressing reporters at his residence in Sadashivanagar on Sunday, Shivakumar said, "The government is committed to safeguarding Bengaluru's reputation in the wake of Rameshwaram cafe blast."

Shivakumar noted that the police are actively investigating the blast case, and the government is fully supportive of their efforts. He reassured that all possible angles are being explored to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

On Saturday leader of Opposition R Ashoka said, "It is fine if they don't make Brand Bengaluru but they should not make Bomb Bengaluru."He attacked Home Minister G Parameshwara and Shivakumar for calling the blast a business rivalry. "Despite senior police officials saying it is a terrorist attack, ministers are not ready to accept that this is as a terror attack. They are creating different stories about business enmity," he said. He said every time there are terror attacks in the state, Congress stays quiet.

The policy of Congress is to attack the majority, said Ashoka. "Shouting slogans of Pakistan Zindabad in Vidhana Soudha is unforgivable. All the terrorists in Karnataka have become tigers under Congress rule. They have a mindset that Congress will not do anything," said Ashoka. Speaking at a press conference, after inaugurating "Sankalpa Abhiyana" Ashoka questioned the recent blast at Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru. "How many more bomb blasts are needed for this government to wake up? Why is this government turning a blind eye? Who is being wooed? Is there pressure from Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi on the government?" he questioned. He also asked to release the not forensic report about the Pakistan zindabad slogans incident raised inside Vidhana Soudha.

Reacting to this, Shivakumar said, "BJP lacks sensitivity and such statements are irresponsible from individuals in positions of responsibility."

He added that BJP is exploiting the opportunity to gain political mileage. "They may have forgotten things that happened during their term. I don't want to do politics over that, but they should introspect. At times like these, they should be aware of the nation's unity, integrity and peace." he said.

—Salar News

BIFF beefs up security after cafe blast

BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

Bangalore International Film Festival (BIFF) has implemented stricter security measures following the recent explosion at Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru. Festival organisers are taking no chances, aiming to ensure the safety of attendees, filmmakers, and staff during the event.More force will be patrolling both inside and outside the venues. Bags will be subjected to thorough inspections at entry points. Use of security cameras will be amplified to closely monitor areas. Measures to detect explosives may be implemented at entry points."

—Salar News

All angles will be probed, says HM

BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara on Sunday said business rivalry, impending elections and terrorising investors coming to Bengaluru given a stable government in the state are some of the angles which the police are working on crack relating to the blast at a City eatery.

According to him, eight teams are working to crack the case and they are accompanied by the National Investigation Agency, National Security Group (NSG) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) assisting the teams.

The explosion took place at Rameshwaram Cafe in Brookfield in East Bengaluru on Friday. A man wearing a cap, mask and glasses is the prime suspect in the case and is still untraceable,

Parameshwara said one of the angles being probed was to see if it was to terrorise Bengaluru given the impending elections. "Elections are approaching. If any organisation is behind it, or if there are some other motives behind it to terrorise people to make Bengaluru look unsafe...," he added.

"As many investors are coming here in view of a stable government, this might have been done either to stop investors from coming to Bengaluru or due to some other unknown reasons," Parameshwara said.

He said business rivals might have done it out of jealousy. That is one of the angles, which is also being discussed.

The Minister appealed to people to rely only on the statements issued by him, the police and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and not on speculative ones.

Dr G Parameshwara ***PHOTO: ANI***

He also said it was a low-intensity bomb as the explosives used were of low intensity and even the quantity might be less.

If the quantity was more, then the intensity would have been higher, he observed.

Speaking about the suspect, the Minister said police have procured about 40 to 50 CCTV footage.

"There is information that he came by bus...26 buses passed there around that time. We went through all the 26 buses. We have found the bus in which he travelled. He was wearing a cap, mask and glasses. We are not getting clarity there as well," he said. Also, regarding the alleged sloganeering incident at the Vidhana Soudha premises, Parameshwara stated that the investigation is ongoing, awaiting the FSL report. He asserted that action would be taken against those responsible without hesitation or succumbing to any pressure.

—Salar News with Agencies

Monkey fever claims one more life, toll reaches 4

BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

A 68-year-old man died due to Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD) commonly known as monkey fever in Uttara Kannada district bringing the death toll to 4.

The deceased, identified as Ramachandra Gowda, 68, from Navilagara village in Sirsi taluk was working in the forest fringe farm in Manikeri village of Ankola taluk.Earlier this year, the Drugs Standard Control Organisation withdrew the vaccine from Siddapura due to concerns about its effectiveness and quality. Consequently, the district health department ceased vaccination for two years, providing only DMP oil to prevent mosquito, tick, and mite bites.As per the latest data a total of 4,641 tests have been conducted between 1 January and 25 February. Among these, there have been 120 positive cases of KFD.

Out of the total cases, 95 individuals have been discharged. 22 active cases are being monitored in areas like Korlakai and Bilagi villages of Siddapur taluk and border areas of Shivamogga district.

—Salar News

IDENTITY MISMATCH

City Umrah pilgrim gets jail in Saudi Arabia

DANIEL GEORGE
BENGALURU, 3 MARCH

A resident of Tilak Nagar in South Jayanagar the City who looked forward to undergoing the pilgrimage for Umrah and travelled there with his family on the holy pilgrimage went through a harrowing time and was detained at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. According to the police, his name and particulars matched with a 'wanted criminal' in a case dating back some 25 years.

Diplomatic sources at the Indian Consulate in Jeddah told Salar News that the passenger identified as Mohammed Ghouse, 57, never travelled to Saudi Arabia or any other country in his life and this was his first trip abroad that landed him in huge trouble.

Ghouse, a transporter employed here in the City along with eight of his relatives, arrived in Saudi last week. Ghouse had embarked on the holy pilgrimage through an Umrah operator based at Cubbonpet.

His nephew Mohammed Mutabbir, told Indian Diplomats that Ghouse was stopped upon arrival at the airport in Jeddah by the passport authorities. He said they took his passport and were under the impression that it was a routine procedure, and he was escorted to a separate room. The family was told that Ghouse's data had matched with that of a criminal wanted by the police.

Ghouse was handed over to the police in the Asir region whose capital headquarters Abha is 600 km away from Jeddah. The family went through nerve-racking moments at this development and did not know which door to knock on to get the head of the family out of this mess.

They approached the Indian consulate, which swung into action and a team of Indian diplomats rushed to the airport and met with the detained Umrah pilgrim. After a detailed investigation he was allowed to go and perform Umrah.

- Data of Indians matching with wanted criminals is a huge problem in Gulf Cooperation Countries with a number of them being detained in Gulf Airports and then allowed to go after thorough verification

Data of Indians matching with wanted criminals is a huge problem in Gulf Cooperation Countries with a number of them being detained in Gulf Airports and then allowed to go after thorough verification. Indian diplomats told their Gulf counterparts that an aadhaar card number should be accessed in cases like this to give a clean chit to the flyer.

During the last Haj season, an elderly pilgrim from Madhya Pradesh was also detained for mismatching details and was released later. *—Salar News*

Cong's Geetha Sivarajkumar hopes to contest LS polls from Shivamogga

SHIVAMOGGA, 3 MARCH

Congress leader Geetha Sivarajkumar, wife of actor Shivarajkumar, has affirmed her willingness to contest the upcoming election from the ShivamoggaLok Sabha constituency if chosen by the Congress party leadership.

Addressing attendees at Minister Madhu Bangarappa's birthday celebration, Sivarajkumar articulated her willingness to enter the electoral fray, subject to approval from key stakeholders within the party. "If I receive the endorsement from the three high commands of the party, namely my husband, my brother, and the party leadership, I am prepared to contest the election," she affirmed. Currently engaged in social work and overseeing Shakti Dham in Mysuru, Geetha expressed her passion for community service and the favourable environment for electoral competition in Shivamogga.

Geetha Sivarajkumar ***PHOTO: ANI***

Reflecting on her past electoral engagements, Geetha highlighted her involvement in campaigning during previous Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, underscoring her commitment to the region. "Despite experiencing setbacks in previous polls, I have remained engaged with Shiamogga district, reaffirming my dedication to serving the community," she stated.

Meanwhile, actor Sivarajkumar emphasized the importance of inspiring others through political engagement. "Geetha's desire to serve as an MP or MLA should serve as a source of inspiration. Her commitment to community service transcends celebrity status," he asserted, expressing optimism for her electoral prospects.

—Salar News

PHOTO: PTI

NGO fact finding team visits to Sandeshkhali

KOLKATA, 3 MARCH

A six-member fact-finding team of an NGO on Sunday went to some villages in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali, which has been witness to widespread protests over allegations of sexual atrocities and land grab by local TMC leaders.Former chief justice of Patna High Court, L Narasimha Reddy, who is leading the team, said they will visit three villages at Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district. "We will visit Majherpara, Natunpara and Naskarpara Ras Temple as per a Calcutta High Court order," he said.The High Court had last week permitted six people as constituents of the fact-finding team to visit Sandeshkhali on Sunday.The NGO had moved the court, claiming that they were stopped by the police from going to Sandeshkhali on 25 February.*—PTI*

R'than: Man kills daughter for refusing to marry

JAIPUR, 3 MARCH

A 31-year old woman was allegedly hacked to death by her father in Rajasthan's Hanumangarh district for refusing to get married, police said on Sunday. The accused Govind Singh, a farmer, has been rounded up and is being questioned, they added. Singh, aged around 55, had been forcing his daughter Krishna to get married but the latter kept refusing, Gogamedi police station Station House Officer (SHO) Ajay Kumar said. On Saturday, Singh went to Krishna's room while she was asleep and allegedly attacked her with an axe. The woman died on the way to hospital, the SHO said. The body has been sent for post-mortem, he added.
—PTI

TDP leader's son held for cheating, GST evasion

VIJAYAWADA, 3 MARCH

Andhra Pradesh police arrested the former director of a private company, the son of a senior TDP leader, for allegedly defrauding the state government of crores of rupees by using shell companies, fake invoices, and other illegal methods. Machavaram Police under Vijayawada Police Commissionerate arrested P Sarath, former director of Avexa, on 29 February for allegedly making gains from the state government through contracts, without actually delivering any goods or services. Sarath is the son of senior Telugu Desam Party leader and former Andhra Pradesh Agriculture Minister P Pulla Rao, and his arrest has assumed political overtones in the southern state. On 25 February, Andhra Pradesh State Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (APSDRI) lodged a complaint with Machavaram Police that Avexa Corporation Pvt Ltd had resorted to fraudulent transactions and wrongfully pocketed government payments.*—PTI*

Denied ticket, MP Harsh Vardhan retires from politics

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

With sitting MP Harsh Vardhan's name not figured from his Chandni Chowk constituency in the list of candidates announced by BJP for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, he on Sunday announced bowing out of active politics. In a long post on X, Vardhan said he will return to his roots after over 30 years of a "glorious electoral career". In the first list of 195 candidates declared by BJP, Praveen Khandelwal has been fielded from Chandni Chowk, a seat that Vardhan holds at present.The former Union minister said service to mankind was his motto when he joined MBBS in GSVM Medical College, Kanpur 50 years back. *—PTI*

LS seat-sharing talks a cliffhanger in Maharashtra now

A major chunk of the Shiv Sena is now with Chief Minister Shinde

MUMBAI, 3 MARCH

BJP-led ruling alliance and the Opposition bloc are united in their belief that win ability is the only formula for seat-sharing in Maharashtra, which sends the second-highest number of 48 MPs to the Lok Sabha after 80 from Uttar Pradesh.

Maharashtra, the country's most industrialised state and its premier FDI magnet, however, has seen a political churn since 2019, with Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena breaking its long-time alliance with BJP, and then suffering a split, just like Sharad Pawar-founded Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

A major chunk of the Shiv Sena is now with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and it is allied with BJP. NCP also met a similar fate as Ajit Pawar walked away with a legislative majority last year and is also part of the ruling alliance.

Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena broke its long-time alliance with BJP, and then suffered a split like NCP *PHOTO: PTI*

The splits and realignments have made seat-sharing a herculean task with claims and counter-claims, leaders from the ruling and opposition parties said.

BJP, which along with the then undivided Shiv Sena won a cumulative 41 out of the 48 seats in 2019, is looking to better the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) tally to 45, whereas the opposition Congress will seek to put behind its disastrous 2019 outing when it won just one seat.

The seat-sharing issue is being discussed with the central leadership, Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule said.

Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), comprising Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), Sharad Pawar faction of NCP and Congress, is wooing Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi, but the grandson of legendary social reformer Babasaheb Ambedkar is yet to make a formal announcement about his allegiance.

As per sources, BJP is expected to contest more than 30 seats, while Ajit Pawar-led NCP, which has sought 10 seats, is likely to get four. Shinde-led party wants to contest 18 seats, the number won by the undivided Shiv Sena in the 2019 polls.

Another senior Congress leader said there is unanimity on 30 seats between his party and the NCP (faction led by Sharad Pawar), while there are differences on five to six of the 18 seats won in 2019 by the then undivided Shiv Sena.

—PTI

Dismantling Opp won't endure: Thackeray

MUMBAI, 3 MARCH

Shiv Sena (UBT) on Sunday criticised BJP, stating that its policy of undermining other political parties is not sustainable.

Aiming for BJP's initial Lok Sabha candidate list, which included figures like Kripashankar Singh, previously accused of money laundering, Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief Uddhav Thackeray expressed surprise at the exclusion of senior leaders like Nitin Gadkari from the list.

Singh, who had faced allegations of financial misconduct, was nominated to contest from Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh, in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, as announced by BJP on Saturday.

BJP has not released its candidates for 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra.

Thackeray, without directly naming BJP or Prime Minister Narendra Modi, remarked, "The politics of dismantling opposition parties will not

PHOTO: PTI

endure... 'Jumla' should be renamed as 'guarantee'."

Singh's history includes leading the Mumbai unit of Congress and serving as a Minister of State for Home. He parted ways with Congress in 2019 due to disagreements regarding the party's stance on the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status by NDA government. He later joined BJP in 2021.

Responding to Thackeray's remarks, Singh dismissed them, questioning the political credibility of someone without their party.

"I don't take remarks of a person who doesn't have a political party of his own," he said.

—PTI

Doors open for alliance with TMC: Ramesh

GWALIOR, 3 MARCH

Even as Trinamool Congress has decided to contest all 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, Congress on Sunday said doors are still open for an alliance with Mamata Banerjee-led TMC for the upcoming general polls.

Ahead of the opposition's rally in Patna, Congress general secretary and in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said they are still hopeful and believe that when Banerjee says she is in INDIA alliance, her priority is to defeat BJP.

"We have not closed any doors. She has unilaterally announced that she will contest all 42 seats (in West Bengal), well that is her announcement. As far as

PHOTO: PTI

we are concerned, talks are continuing, the doors are still open and the final word will not be said till the final word is said," he said.

On the rally to be held in Bihar's capital Patna, Ramesh said it is a joint Opposition rally and coming after Prime Minister went there on Saturday.

"It's a very significant political rally and it shows the Opposition unity to defeat BJP and its allies," he said. *—PTI*

PM Modi to visit 12 states ahead of polls

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to attend 29 programmes spread across 12 states and union territories over the next 10 days ahead of the likely announcement of the Lok Sabha polls.

Officials said he will be visiting Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Delhi. On Monday, he will unveil multiple development projects in Adilabad in Telangana and later visit the Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited (BHAVINI) in Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu.

He will address public meetings in Adilabad as well as Chennai, the officials said. Modi will launch several projects in Sangareddy in Telangana on 5 March and address an event before travelling to Odisha where he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of numerous development initiatives.He will then address a public meeting in Chandikhole in Odisha before travelling to West Bengal.On 6 March, he will unveil development projects in Kolkata and address a public meeting in Barasat. He will then travel to Bihar and inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of multiple development projects in Bettiah, the officials said.
—PTI

SOREN SAYS

BJP will uproot tribals from forest land, if it wins LS polls

RANCHI, 3 MARCH

Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren on Saturday alleged that BJP would loot tribal land and uproot them from forests and coal-bearing areas if the saffron party is not defeated in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

He said that BJP government at the Centre attempted to amend various laws that protect tribal rights but the coalition dispensation in the state would be protesting against such attempts.

The seven-day budget session of the assembly, which started on 23 February, was adjourned sine die by Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahto. As many as four bills, including an International University Bill, 2024, was passed on the concluding day of the session.

"This budget session

PHOTO: PTI

- The seven-day budget session of the assembly, which started on 23 February, was adjourned sine die by Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahto

highlighted the achievements of the government in past four years. A budget of Rs 1,28,900 crore was passed for the fiscal 2024-25 and the government set a target to make Jharkhand a Rs 10 lakh crore economy by 2029-30," Mahto said.

Soren said "BJP government has made amendments in the forest right Act, under which the power of gram sabha has been snatched. Similarly, an attempt is being made to amend the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act and Chotanagpur Tenancy Act". He urged the ruling alliance legislators to make people aware of BJP's intention. Soren said that former chief minister Hemant Soren had understood the strategy of BJP.

"So, he was put in jail on land issue, while his name is not there anywhere," Soren claimed.

He said the coalition government has worked to strengthen the education, social and economic system of the state so that "roti, kapda, and makaan could be ensured for everyone". *—PTI*

TEJASWI MOCKS BJP, CALLS IT 'FACTORY OF LIES'

PATNA, 3 MAR

Labelling the BJP as a "factory of lies", former Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday asserted that his RJD stands for 'Rights, Jobs and Development'.

Addressing the 'Jan Vishwas Maha Rally' in Patna's Gandhi Maidan, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader said, "I can say with confidence that the BJP is a factory of lies... but the RJD stands for 'Rights, Jobs and Development'."

"BJP leaders make false promises (jumla karte hain)... but we fight for the rights and jobs of the people of Bihar and the country," he said. Mocking Nitish Kumar he said, "Nitish chacha (uncle) does something like this and frequently changes sides."

—PTI

Pressure tactics will not save govt: HP MLAs

SHIMLA, 3 MARCH

Pressure tactics such as targeting businesses of Independent MLAs and their families is a futile exercise and will not save the government, said two Independents who voted against Congress in the recent Rajya Sabha polls in Himachal Pradesh.

Speaking to PTI on Sunday, KL Thakur, Independent MLA from Nalagarh, said, "It is unfortunate that the chief minister has stooped to such a level and this kind of politics has never been seen in Himachal Pradesh."

"I have been a former BJP legislator and had been associated with the party for years. I voted as per my ideology," he said.

The Independent MLAs -- KL Thakur (Nalagarh), Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra) annd Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur), were among the nine MLAs who voted in favour of BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha election for the lone seat from the state on 27 August.

The MLAs voting for the Congress candidate Abhishek Manu Singhvi failed to make it past the half-way mark in 68-member House.

The Independent MLAs in the state have alleged that raids were conducted at their business firms and Congress workers burnt their effigies.

They have also alleged that the road leading to house of Congress rebel and MLA Lahaul and Spiti Ravi Thakur was closed after he cross-voted against his party.Pressure tactics of hitting businesses of Independent MLAs and their families is a futile exercise and will not save the government, the Nalagarh MLA said. *—PTI*

Congress: Agnipath scheme 'compromised' nat'l security

New Delhi, 3 March

Congress on Sunday attacked the Centre over Agnipath scheme, alleging that it has "compromised" national security and "severely disrupted" the armed forces' recruitment processes in India. Congress' attack came after party leader Rahul Gandhi had an interaction with ex-servicemen, potential Agniveer recruits, and the youth whose regular recruitment into the armed forces has been disrupted by the introduction of Agnipath during Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Madhya Pradesh. Congress General Secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh in a post on X said that Gandhi had a 40-minute interaction with the three communities on the morning of the 50th day of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra. " Agnipath scheme has compromised national security and severely disrupted the armed forces' recruitment processes in India," he alleged. Ramesh claimed the ex-servicemen have noted that the scheme compromises national security by demoralising the armed forces and rushing through training for our servicemen in a mere six months. *—PTI*

RAHUL MOCKS CENTRE

Railways utterly mismanaged, only for rich: RaGa

Rahul Gandhi claimed that the trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a "guarantee of betrayal" *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The Congress on Sunday said no amount of "slick PR" can hide the manner in which the Indian Railways has been "utterly mismanaged" during the Modi government, with Rahul Gandhi alleging that policies for the national transporter were being framed keeping only the rich in mind.

Gandhi also claimed that the trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a "guarantee of betrayal".

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi alleged that by showing the dream of making those wearing "hawai chappal" (slippers) travel by "hawai jahaz" (airplane), Prime Minister Modi is even distancing them from "gareebon ki sawari" (vehicle of the poor) railways.

"Amidst a 10 per cent increase in fare every year, loot in the name of dynamic fare, rising cancellation charges and expensive platform tickets, people are being lured by showing them a picture of an 'elite train' that the poor cannot even set foot on," the former Congress chief said.

The government has collected Rs 3,700 crore from senior citizens in the last three years by "snatching away" the exemptions given to them, he claimed.

Common persons' trains are made to languish to give precedence to the train selected for publicity, Gandhi alleged.

He claimed that the poor and middle class passengers have been left out of railways' priority.

"To increase the number of AC coaches, the number of general coaches is being reduced. Not only labourers and farmers but also students and service class people travel in these (general) coaches. The production of AC coaches has also been increased to three times that of normal coaches," he alleged.

"In fact, ending the tradition of presenting the Railway Budget separately was a conspiracy to hide these exploits," Gandhi charged.

The railways' policies are being framed keeping only the rich in mind and this is a "betrayal" of 80 per cent of India's population that depends on it, he said.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "No amount of slick PR, social media posts by Ministers, and grand announcements can hide the manner in which the Indian Railways has been utterly mismanaged during the Modi regime - a decade of degradation with an anti-poor mindset."

Ramesh said five key issues have emerged - "ticket vasooli, anti-poor infrastructure priorities, lagging train speeds, callous attitude to passenger safety and deteriorating railways finances".

Explaining the issues, Ramesh said the railways reports an average price per passenger, per km.

In 2013-14, this was Rs 0.32/passenger-km and by 2021-22, this had more than doubled to Rs 0.66/passenger-km, a 107% increase, he said. *—PTI*

BHARAT JODO NYAY YATRA

Added 'nyay' word as injustice leads to hatred: RaGa

GWALIOR, 3 MARCH

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday emphasised the importance of "nyay" (justice) during his ongoing yatra, attributing the rise of hatred in the nation to prevailing injustices.

Addressing a gathering in Mohana, located in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district, he flagged economic disparity, social inequality, and the mistreatment of farmers and youth as key concerns. BJP has been denying all such charges.

Gandhi, on a brief stopover for his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', criticised the adverse effects of policies like the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and demonetisation, linking them to a surge in unemployment rates, which he claimed were the highest in 40 years.

The east-to-west Manipur-Mumbai yatra is scheduled to traverse 6,700 kilometres through 15 states *PHOTO: PTI*

" GST and note ban have fanned extreme unemployment," he claimed, adding "the unemployment rate now was the highest of the last 40 years".

Gandhi further claimed that India's youth unemployment rate was even higher than countries like Pakistan, attributing it to the impact of policies of the government which had taken a toll on small businesses.

Gandhi said while commencing his second phase of yatra he had incorporated the word "nyay" as he claimed that hatred was spreading in the country due to injustice in economic and social sectors and injustice against farmers and youth.

He also highlighted the marginalised status of 73 per cent of the population, comprising Other Backward Classes, tribals, and Dalits, stating they were excluded from governance and business opportunities.

Accusing the central government of favouritism towards industrialists over farmers, he criticised the waiver of massive loans for select industrialists while neglecting the debt relief needed by farmers.

Gandhi underscored the financial requirements of key social welfare programs like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), stressing the significance of utilising funds for public welfare rather than catering to the interests of a few.

The east-to-west Manipur-Mumbai yatra is scheduled to traverse 6,700 kilometres through 15 states. It aims at highlighting the message of 'nyay' (justice) while meeting common people on the way. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Two forest employees injured in tiger attack

UMARIA, 3 MARCH

Two employees of the forest department have been injured in an attack by a tiger at Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district. The incident took place on Saturday during the search operation for an injured tiger after a big cat died recently in a territorial fight with another feline. A team searching for the injured tiger was attacked in BTR's Panpatha range and two employees were injured, forest department's sub-divisional officer Fateh Singh Ninama said. They could not sense the tiger's presence in the area as the grass had turned dry and the big cat camouflaged with it. Both the injured persons are undergoing treatment at a community health centre in Manpur. The state has several tiger reserves, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura and Panna.—*PTI*

Cop, Naxalite killed in encounter in Chhattisgarh

KANKER, 3 MARCH

A police constable and a Naxalite were killed in an encounter in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Sunday, a senior police official said. The gunfight occurred in a forest near Hidur village under Chhotebethiya police station limits, where a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P said. The operation was launched based on a specific input about the presence of Naxalites in the Hidur forest. Personnel from District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Bastar Fighters, both units of the state police, along with Border Security Force (BSF) and district force, were involved in the operation. The patrolling team was cordoning off the forest when Naxalites fired on them indiscriminately, leading to the gun battle. "Constable Ramesh Kurethi of Bastar Fighters was killed in the gunfight. —*PTI*

Woman, 3 daughters killed in house collapse

JAMMU, 3 MARCH

A woman and her three daughters were killed after their 'kutcha' house collapsed in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district. Moderate to heavy rains lashed several parts of Jammu and Kashmir on 1 and 2 March. Dozens of structures including residential houses were also damaged by strong winds and hailstorms in different parts of the Jammu region. In Reasi incident, Phalla Akhter, 30, her daughters Nasima, 5, Safeena Kousar, 3, and Samreen Kousar, 2, lost their lives when their house in Kunderdhan Mohra village in Chassana tehsil collapsed following heavy rains. Two elderly members of the family – Kalu, 60, and his wife Bano Begum,58, suffered injuries were taken to hospital.—*PTI*

Speaker touches live wire, 3 electrocuted during procession

KAUSHAMBI, 3 MARCH

Three people, including a brother duo, got electrocuted when a DJ speaker came in contact with an overhead high-tension wire. The incident took place on Saturday night during a marriage procession in Duhniapur village in Kaushambi police station area, Circle Officer Awadhesh Kumar Vishwakarma said. DJ speaker placed on a trolley was being pulled when it accidentally touched the high-tension line. Two brothers Ravi, 20, and Rajesh, 18, and a labourer Satish, 18, got electrocuted, the officer said.—*PTI*

Drones to be implemented to bolster maritime security

Procurement of drones is a step towards enhancing surveillance

MUMBAI, 3 MARCH

Security agencies are devising plans to implement drone surveillance systems along the coastal regions of Mumbai and Goa to bolster maritime security.

This comes in the wake of a recent incident where three individuals from Kuwait reached Gateway of India, underscoring vulnerabilities in the current coastal security setup.

The trio, Nitso Ditto 31, Vijay Vinay Anthony, 29, and J Sahayatta Anish, 29 had navigated Indian waters after absconding with a boat from their employer in Kuwait, alleging mistreatment.

Upon surrendering to the authorities, they were arrested for violating Passport (Entry into India) Rules. The officials expressed concerns that the individuals could have easily blended into the local populace undetected.

A forensic analysis of their Global Positioning System (GPS) had many missing patches, with the trio claiming they had switched off the set to save battery.

Security agencies are devising plans to implement drone surveillance systems along the coastal regions of Mumbai and Goa PHOTO: ANI

These, the officials feel, could be misused by anti-national elements and advocated for the use of drones extensively for maintaining surveillance along the country's maritime borders.

The officials said traditional maritime surveys and inspections will have to transform with the integration of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) as the inclusion of drones -- armed with high-resolution cameras and sensors -- would revolutionise the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of these tasks.

Recognising the need for heightened vigilance, security agencies feel that the deployment of long-range drones is a must to monitor the 652.6kms coastline in Maharashtra and the 101.0kms stretch in Goa.

Coast Guard's procurement of drones with advanced capabilities, including vertical take-off and landing features, signifies a step towards enhancing surveillance, security operations, and search-and-rescue missions.

Nevertheless, the officials emphasise the imperative for additional drones equipped with extended range and night vision capabilities to pre-empt potential threats emanating from neighbouring nations, particularly Pakistan.

The officials feel that drones with sophisticated identification and tracking capabilities could identify vessels having an Automatic Identification System (AIS) and track their movements.

India's expansive 7,516.6kms coastline spanning nine states and four Union Territories underscores the magnitude of the security challenge.

Following the 26/11 attacks, the government has undertaken various initiatives to fortify coastal defences against maritime threats.

With round-the-clock monitoring and collaboration facilitated through these JOCs, a seamless network comprising naval and Coast Guard teams, state marine police, Customs, Intelligence Bureau, and port authorities has been established, underscoring a collective commitment to safeguarding India's coastal borders against potential threats

—*PTI*

SNOW LASHES SPITI, LAHAUL

Some shops were buried in an avalanche at Tandi Bridge in Lahaul subdivision PHOTO: PTI

Avalanche in HP bars Chenab, 500 roads closed

SHIMLA, 3 MARCH

- The flow of Chenab river was obstructed following an avalanche at Dara Waterfall near Jasrat village in Lahaul and Spiti

An avalanche hit a village in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul and Spiti district in the wee hours of Sunday, obstructing the flow of Chenab and triggering an alert in the adjoining area, officials said.

Meanwhile, heavy snow and rainfall in Himachal Pradesh in the past two days have triggered over half a dozen avalanches and landslides, leading to closure of over 500 roads, including five national highways, they said.

So far no casualty has been reported in any of the avalanches, they added.

The flow of Chenab river was obstructed following an avalanche at Dara Waterfall near Jasrat village in Lahaul and Spiti. The district, located at a high altitude, reported heavy snowfall in the past 24 hours.

Residents of adjoining villages of Jobrang, Rapi, Jasrath, Tarand and Tharot have been advised to stay cautious and inform the nearest police post in case of emergency, said SP Lahaul and Spiti Mayank Chaudhary.

Some shops were buried in an avalanche at Tandi Bridge in Lahaul subdivision.

Incidents of multiple avalanche occurred in Lahaul and Spiti at Seli Nallah in Rashel village, Faldi Nallah in Jobrang, Cho Veer Mod in Lohni and Tatha Nallah near Udaipur village.

An avalanche was also reported near Karcham helipad in Sangla in Kinnaur district, the officials said.

Of the 500 roads shut for traffic, five are national highways. A maximum of 290 roads are closed in Lahaul and Spiti, 75 in Kinnaur, 72 in Chamba, 35 in Shimla, 18 in Kullu, 16 in Mandi, one each in Kangra and Sirmaur districts, according to the state emergency operation centre. People are advised not to travel to upper Shimla areas. as the roads have become slippery following snowfall, Shimla Deputy Commissioner Anupam Kashyap told PTI on Sunday.

He added that work is underway to clear the blocked roads and resume traffic movement.

Life was thrown out of gear in parts of Lahaul and Spiti, Kinnaur and Chamba as heavy snowfall disrupted electricity and communication.

A total of 2,563 transformers are out of order in the state and 72 water supply schemes have been disrupted, according to the emergency operation centre.

Three houses, one each in Lahaul and Spiti, Solan and Sirmaur and Kullu were damaged due to snow, rain and lightning. Supply of essential commodities like milk, bread, vegetables and newspaper was affected in Upper Shimla region, it added. —*PTI*

Meethi River project: HC says, can't forget 2005 deluge in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 3 MARCH

The Bombay High Court has said it cannot forget the July 2005 deluge when Mumbai was almost entirely under water and the extensive damage caused mostly due to illicit construction along the banks of the Mithi river.

A division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Kamal Khata said public interest will not allow it to grant any wide relief to a welfare society which has filed a plea against the proposed Mithi river improvement project.

The bench on 29 February heard two petitions filed by the Ashiyana Welfare Society and Sameer Ahmed Choudhary, who claimed to be affected by the proposed infrastructure project for the improvement of the Mithi river.

The pleas sought for a restraint on demolition of the society's structures.

"Public memory may be short, but it cannot be that short that the city entirely forgets the time just a few years ago in July 2005, when it was almost entirely under water and one of the portions most severely affected was the Mithi river especially at its mouth," the High Court said.

There was extensive damage and much of this was to the illicit construction along the banks of the Mithi river, it added.

—*PTI*

SENA LEADER'S DEATH

Mumbai: Cops crackdown against owners of unregistered firearms

MUMBAI, 3 MARCH

The elite Crime Branch of the Mumbai Police is currently conducting a rigorous operation to validate arms licenses in the metropolis, including the re-registration of those which have been issued from other states.

This decision follows the tragic murder of Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Abhishek Ghosalkar, prompting an additional directive to verify the licenses of individuals possessing weapons for personal protection and those involved in security services.

Over the past 10 days, three individuals have been arrested by Crime Branch units in their crackdown on unauthorised weapon possession, an official said.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Lakhmi Gautam told PTI, "Security personnel and private bodyguards employed to safeguard builders, politicians, etc., are currently under scrutiny, with their weapon licenses undergoing thorough verification."Individuals holding licenses from other states and utilising their firearms in Mumbai are required to transfer their licenses and furnish relevant firearm documentation to the city police, the official stated.The official stressed "failure to provide adequate details or documentation regarding a weapon will result in charges under the Arms Act. It is imperative to note that individuals carrying firearms, whether as security guards or personal bodyguards, are prohibited from displaying them openly."In a recent enforcement action, Crime Branch arrested Jamrul Hanif Khan,26, and Mohammad Yasar Mohammad Iqbal,34, in Ghatkopar on 21 February for possessing firearms for which license was provided by an additional district magistrate in Poonch, Jammu and Kashmir for their protection. —*PTI*

Bishnupur Armoury loot case: CBI chargesheets seven people

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The CBI has filed a charge sheet against seven accused in connection with the looting of arms and ammunition from the Bishnupur police armoury during the Manipur ethnic violence last year, officials said on Sunday.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recently filed its charge sheet before the court of Chief judicial magistrate in Kamrup (Metro) in Assam's Guwahati.

The accused named in the charge sheet are Laishram Prem Singh, Khumukcham Dhiren alias Thapkpa, Moirangthem Anand Singh, Athokpam Kajit alias Kishorjit, Loukrakpam Michael Mangangcha alias Michael, Konthoujam Romojit Meitei alias Romojit, and Keisham Johnson alias Johnson.On 3 August last year, a mob looted more than 300 weapons and 19,800 rounds of ammunition from two rooms of the 2nd Indian Reserve Battalion headquarters at Naranseina in Bishnupur.

PHOTO: PTI

- On 3 August last year, a mob looted more than 300 weapons and 19,800 rounds of ammunition from two rooms of the 2nd Indian Reserve Battalion headquarters

Around 9,000 bullets of different calibres, an AK series assault rifle, three 'Ghaatak' rifles, 195 self-loading rifles, five MP-5 guns, 16.9 mm pistols, 25 bulletproof jackets, 21 carbines, and 124 hand grenades, among other things, were looted by the mob, according to officials.

—*PTI*

Assam cops recover drugs worth ₹1 cr in Mizoram

CHAMPHAI, 3 MARCH

In a joint operation, Assam Rifles and Mizoram police recovered drugs and foreign origin beer worth Rs 1.75 crore in Champhai district along the India-Myanmar border, Officials said.

The security personnel also apprehended four persons.

The Public Relations Officer of IGAR (East) said that, based on secret information, a joint team of Assam Rifles and Mizoram Police carried out two separate operations in New Hruikawn, Zokhawthar in Champhai district on 1 March.

During the search operation, forces recovered 95 grams of heroin worth Rs 66.50 lakh in Zokhawthar and 155 grams of heroin and 10 cases of foreign origin Beer worth Rs 1.08 crore.

The PRO said that forces also apprehended four individuals.

"The entire consignment and four apprehended individuals were handed over to Police Department Zokhawthar for further legal proceedings," the PRO said.On the other hand, in yet another success in its crusade against smuggling activities, Assam Rifles along with Special Narcotics Police Station, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) (Crime), Aizawl, recovered six soap cases containing 72.18 grams of heroin worth Rs 50,52,600 laks in general area Rangvamual, on 29 February.

They also apprehended a Myanmar national during the operation.

—*ANI*

Break-up trauma is not suicide abetment: Court

MUMBAI, 3 MARCH

Suicide due to mental trauma after a break-up does not make for a case of abetment, a court here observed while acquitting a woman accused of abetting her former boyfriend's death.

It is "morally" incorrect to change partners as per one's whims and fancies, but there is no remedy under the penal law for the person facing rejection in a relationship, the court held. Additional sessions judge NP Mehta made these observations on 29 February and acquitted Manisha Chudasama and her fiancée Rajesh Panwar who were accused of abetting the suicide of Nitin Keni.

Keni was found hanging in his house on 15 January, 2016, and was rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him dead.

"Morally, it is incorrect to switch love partner at one's whims and fancies, but if one sees from the provision of penal law, no remedy lies with the victim whose partner has switched his or her love relationship with other on her/his choice," the judge observed. The judge, in his order, said that to constitute abetment there should be active suggestion, instigation or encouragement on the part of the accused. —*PTI*

Kerala student's death: Cong seeks CBI probe

T'APURAM, 3 MARCH

Congress leader VD Satheesan on Sunday sought a CBI probe into the recent death of a student at Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University in Wayanad.

In a letter written to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, he said that details of the brutal assault that led to the death of 20-year-old Sidharthan JS on 18 February, are emerging from the university.

"His parents are alleging that a mob led by SFI leaders held a public trial for days without giving him food or water and brutally assaulted him to death before hanging him. It's a serious matter that the teachers were also part of this brutality," Satheesan said. The leader of the Opposition in the assembly also alleged that senior CPI(M) leaders of the district had threatened the investigating officers.

Congress leader alleged that there were serious lapses in the police investigation and they (police) even attempted to protect the accused in the case.

"We cannot expect a fair investigation from the police. Such an incident should not be repeated in Kerala. The family is demanding a CBI probe. The state government should consider all the factors and hand over the case to CBI to bring out the facts and conspiracy behind the incident, Satheesan said. Sidharthan, a second-year student of was found hanging in his hostel. —*PTI*

NEW INITIATIVE

NE youths 'shoot' for responsible tourism

GUWAHATI, 3 MARCH

'Shooting' has been Lemdumong's passion since he was a teenager, but the last couple of years saw the 24-year-old switch from the gun to the video camera to capture the beauty of wildlife and nature.

His new-found love for the audio-visual medium has taken him from his native Nagaland to the high reaches of Sikkim, seeking to help a community of yak herders sustain with the concept of responsible tourism.

He is among 30 youths mentored as part of 'Responsible Tourism Fellowships' by environment conservation organisation Green Hub and motorcycle manufacturer Royal Enfield to promote sustainable and conscious travel in the Himalayan region.

Lemdumong was part of a three-member group that worked at Chongri in the westernmost part of Sikkim PHOTO: PIXABAY

Lemdumong was part of a three-member group that worked at Chongri in the westernmost part of Sikkim, where they engaged with the local community of yak herders to develop a tourist trail focusing on sustainability and adventure.

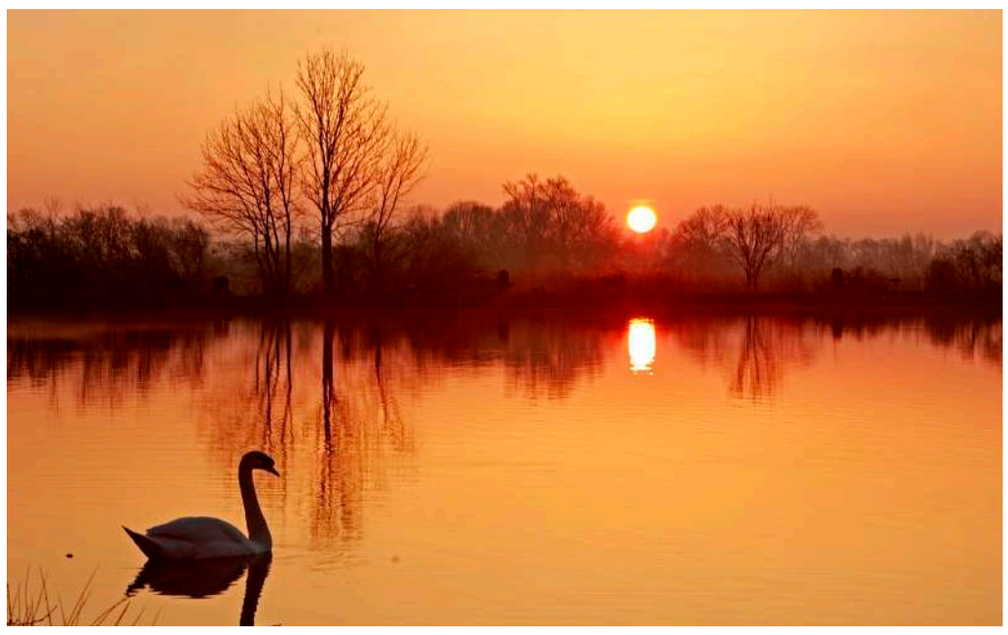
"Hunting is a way of life for most in our villages and I was involved in it from 14 years of age. It is mostly need-based for us. In 2021, my uncle Thangson became a fellow under a different programme run by Green Hub and I assisted him in filming the wildlife around our place," Lemdumong said.

"It was when I saw the pictures and videos of the birds and other animals that I looked at these with new clarity and realised the beauty in them. It was an amazing realisation and a major turning point for me," he added.

Lemdumong applied for the six-month fellowship on responsible tourism and he was among 14 fellows trained in the second batch, which commenced in September 2023, at five project sites across Arunachal Pradesh (Zemithang), Sikkim (Geyzing), Meghalaya (Hima Laitkroh) and Assam (Sonapur and Nagaon).The fellows presented their unique and hyper-local action plans to build their responsible tourism business models at a conclave here recently.

Lemdumong teamed up with Lyangsai Tikhak of Arunachal Pradesh, a college drop-out who helps out at his family farm, and Talabya Raj of Assam, a travel vlogger.

A leading environment filmmaker herself, Banerji said the medium of film-making for story-telling is used by the fellows to tell untold stories of the land, people, and generational knowledge.Bidisha Dey, executive director, of Eicher Group Foundation, CSR arm of Royal Enfield, said Responsible Tourism Fellowship was conceived to bring responsible tourism as an established practice across the Himalayas. —*PTI*



NATURE AT ITS BEST

A swan swims in the morning sunlight on a pond at the Veckenstedt pond farm in Veckenstedt, the northern Harz region, Germany, on Sunday
PHOTO: PTI

Indians fleeing abroad for work even in conflict zones

INCREASING UNEMPLOYMENT

Despite the country's apparent economic growth, many Indians – even those with a university degree – are struggling to secure stable employment
PHOTO: PTI

Israel plans to bring in 70,000 workers from abroad, including 10,000 from India, to boost its construction sector. A labour shortage has emerged after 80,000 Palestinian workers were barred from entering the country after the 7 October Hamas-led attacks.

Figures suggest that India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Between July and September of 2023, it grew at a pace of 7.6 per cent. If it continues along this current growth trajectory, India will become the world's third-largest economy by 2027.

The fact that thousands of Indian workers are nonetheless queuing up to secure a job in a conflict zone abroad is a consequence of a jobs crisis at home. Despite the country's apparent economic growth, many Indians – even those with a university degree – are struggling to secure stable employment.

But India has a large working-age population (people between 15 and 64 years of age), so the demand for jobs is immense. India needs to create an estimated 10 million to 12 million jobs each year for the unemployed, new workforce entrants, and surplus agricultural workers to be able to secure non-farm work.

How can India provide jobs for its increasingly educated young? It needs even faster economic growth and for this growth to be labour intensive. This will, in turn, generate demand in the economy from all sections of society (not just the middle class and above).

Structural change

Between 2004 and 2014, India's economy grew at a rate of nearly 8 per cent per year (despite the global financial crisis in 2008). This rapid growth was accompanied by a hastening of structural change in employment.

During that period, the economy created on average 7.5 million new non-farm jobs every year. The number of manufacturing jobs in India rose from 53 million in 2004 to 60 million by 2012.

However, Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes were taken out of circulation in 2016, making 86 per cent of India's currency illegal. The cash recall was intended to accelerate the country's transition towards a formal economy. But it led to acute shortages of cash, destroying jobs in the construction and manufacturing sectors.

Growth slowed to 2020 when, at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, the Indian government imposed a nationwide lockdown at four hours' notice. The lockdown caused India's gross domestic product (GDP) to contract by 5.8 per cent – more than twice the rate at which the global economy shrank.

Employment in manufacturing jobs fell again, especially in labour-intensive manufacturing where employment had already been in decline for five years following the botched implementation of demonetisation. Around 60 million workers returned to jobs in agriculture, reversing the structural change in employment that had been underway for 15 years.

But a focus on services alone will not suffice. This "New India" economy currently constitutes less than 15 per cent of the country's economy and a fraction of that in employment. Such a strategy will generate jobs mainly for highly skilled people, rather than the millions of Indian workers that are searching for non-farm jobs.

Creating jobs in India

India's investment-to-GDP ratio is still below 30 per cent, and has remained below the 31 per cent inherited by the current government when it came to power ten years ago. The potential for a twofold increase in construction employment (a trend that was observed between 2004 and 2012) over the next five years hinges on the revival of private investment.

Labour-intensive manufacturing by micro, small and medium enterprises also needs a sustained fillip. The government's focus is currently on large companies – so-called "national champions" like industrial conglomerates Tata and Mahindra – which are being encouraged through subsidies.

If these subsidies were instead redirected towards smaller enterprises, they might do more for employment generation. Large corporations typically use highly capital-intensive methods of production, whereas smaller ones tend to absorb more labour. The third area where employment can be generated is, indeed, services. Public expenditure should prioritise public health, education, vocational training and universities.These sectors are labour-intensive, contribute to the creation of public goods, and will build the human capital needed by both manufacturing and modern export-oriented services. That is the only way India's health and education services can reach the levels observed in east Asia and attract more foreign investment.A renewed focus on smaller enterprises across these sectors is needed. Inclusive growth requires providing jobs rapidly at the bottom of the pyramid, not only at the top of the wage – and skill – distribution.

Courtesy, The Conversation

SALAR سالار

Mental fatigue can lead to psychological triggers

Do you ever feel spacey, distracted and worn down toward the end of a long work-related task – especially if that task is entirely a mental one? For over a century, psychologists have been trying to determine whether mental fatigue is fundamentally similar to physical fatigue or whether it is governed by different processes.

Some researchers have argued that exerting mental effort depletes a limited supply of energy – the same way physical exertion fatigues muscles. The brain consumes energy in the form of glucose, which can run low.

Other researchers see mental fatigue as more of a psychological phenomenon. Mind-wandering means the current mental effort is not being sufficiently rewarded – or opportunities to do other, more enjoyable activities are being lost.

The research suggests mental fatigue is in large part a psychological phenomenon – but one that can be modified by setting goals.

Vigilance is hard to sustain

Psychologists in the World War II era studied why soldiers monitoring radar were losing focus during their shifts. Psychologist Norman Mackworth designed the "clock test," in which military participants were asked to watch a large "clock" on a wall for up to two hours. The second hand ticked at regular intervals. But rarely and unpredictably, it would jump twice the usual distance. The task was to detect those tiny variations.

Within the first 30 minutes, the subjects' performance dropped dramatically – and then continued to decline more gradually. Psychologists named the necessary mental focus "vigilance" – and concluded it was fundamentally limited in humans.

Decades of research since has confirmed that vigilance is difficult to maintain, even over brief intervals. In studies, people report feeling stressed and fatigued following even a brief vigilance task. In 2021, one study even showed a reduction of blood flow through the brain during vigilance.

Are all forms of mental work like vigilance? Surely, there are instances where people can engage with mental work without feeling fatigued.

Setting goals

We decided to study whether goal-setting could improve mental focus and ran three experiments to test this idea.

In the first experiment, we showed 108 undergraduate students at the University of Oregon a screen with four empty white boxes against a gray background. Every one to three seconds, an X appeared in one of the four boxes. Their task was to indicate where that symbol appeared as quickly as possible. After each response, the participant was given feedback about both their accuracy and their speed, such as "Correct! Reaction time = 400 milliseconds."Periodically during the 26-minute test, we also asked participants to rank their mental state as task-focused, distracted or mind-wandering. This gave us data about how they felt, in addition to how they did.

We randomly gave half of them a specific goal: Keep their reaction times under 400 milliseconds while staying as accurate as possible. We gave no goal to the other half.

Our results were mixed. People who were given a goal did not experience as many slow reaction times, but having goals didn't increase their top speed. It also didn't change how often people reported feeling distracted.

Setting increasingly harder goals

Randomly they were assigned a goal to half of the 112 fresh participants and no goal to the other half. But this time, as the experiment progressed, we increased the difficulty of the goal from a 450-millisecond reaction time to 400 milliseconds and then to 350 by the final block. Setting these harder-over-time goals had a huge effect on performance.

Compared with the participants assigned a set goal in the first experiment, the participants assigned increasingly more difficult goals in the second experiment had faster reaction times by an average of 45 milliseconds – about a 10 per cent improvement. Participants in the second experiment also reported fewer instances of mind-wandering and showed no slowing of reaction times throughout the experiment. In other words, they showed no signs of mental fatigue. And we didn't have to make the task easier. In fact, we made it harder.The first two experiments were conducted online because of shutdowns related to Covid-19. Our third study – a repeat of our second study – was conducted in person. We got the same results.

These findings, combined with other recent work we've conducted, have changed the way my colleagues and I consider mental fatigue. If you're wondering how to implement these findings in your life, make simple, direct and specific goals for yourself. Mark when you complete the goals – the feedback can help you keep going. If you're feeling particularly drained, take short breaks. Even brief rests of less than two minutes can restore capacity for mental work.

Courtesy, The Conversation

Some researchers have argued that exerting mental effort depletes a limited supply of energy – the same way physical exertion fatigues muscles
PHOTO: PIXABAY

LETTERS Write to us at salar@salar.news

The new AI-equipped satellite to map methane emissions

MethaneSAT is designed to provide an unparalleled view of methane emanating from oil and gas fields across the planet — as well as from agricultural facilities and landfills
PHOTO: LINKEDIN

Carbon dioxide usually dominates the discussion when it comes to climate change, but slashing methane emissions could have an even bigger effect on global warming over the next few decades. With the help of a satellite that is set to launch as early today from Vandenberg Space Force Base near Lompoc, California, governments and businesses will at last have a tool to help them to pinpoint methane hotspots on Earth and plug the leaks.

Scientists raise alarm over 'dangerously fast' growth in atmospheric methane

Developed by a coalition of environmentalists, scientists and aerospace engineers at a cost of around USD 88 million, MethaneSAT is designed to provide an unparalleled view of methane emanating from oil and gas fields across the planet — as well as from agricultural facilities and landfills. Working with Google, MethaneSAT's operators will process data from the satellite using an atmospheric model that can track methane in the air back to its sources on the ground. They will then make the data freely available. Google also plans to use artificial-intelligence algorithms to help map oil and gas infrastructure worldwide and identify where the pollution is coming from.

MethaneSAT will enable corporate and government accountability through "radical transparency", says Steven Hamburg, Chief scientist at the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), an advocacy group based in New York City that led the satellite's development. "This will be the first time that we have ever had this type of information for any greenhouse gas," he says.

More than 80 times as potent as CO2 at trapping heat around Earth, methane is collectively responsible for around 30 per cent of global warming since the Industrial Revolution. Methane lasts around 12 years in the atmosphere, whereas CO2 persists for centuries. This means that curbing methane emissions could have a notable cooling effect on global temperatures over the short term.

"We could basically cut warming nearly in half over the next couple of decades if we were to eliminate our methane emissions," says Ilissa Ocko, an atmospheric scientist at EDF, whose research suggests that the oil and gas sector can reduce the bulk of its emissions at little to no extra cost1, for example by replacing leaky seals or broken valves.

An audacious project

MethaneSAT has its roots in pioneering aircraft campaigns that helped to reveal the extent of pollution from US oil and gas fields roughly a decade ago. EDF subsequently worked with academics and those in industry on a series of studies that helped to document emissions across the United States, eventually showing that methane emissions from the oil and gas sector were 60 per cent higher than official estimates2. On the basis of that work, the group then organized a team to design the satellite.

In 2018, EDF and its main scientific partners at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, were awarded start-up money through the Audacious Project, a partnership involving the New York non-profit group TED, to develop MethaneSAT. If it succeeds, EDF will be the first environmental group to develop a satellite of such scientific calibre.

What sets MethaneSAT apart is its resolution. Commercial satellites already circling Earth can track major methane sources such as leaking wells and landfills. By contrast, a sensor aboard the European satellite Sentinel-5 Precursor can scan across vast landscapes and measure methane concentrations in the atmosphere, but without pinpointing emission sources. "We're fitting into a place where nobody else is operating," says Steve Wofsy, an atmospheric scientist at Harvard University, who is leading MethaneSAT's technical team.

Having a moment

The spacecraft arrives during what many are calling a 'methane moment' for the planet. Last December, US President Joe Biden's administration finalized regulations designed to slash methane emissions from the oil and gas sector by 80 per cent by 2035. Other governments, such as those of European Union member states, are considering pollution standards for natural gas, meaning that they might impose fees on imports from producers that exceed limits on methane emissions. Industry is also stepping up with commitments: at last year's United Nations COP28 climate summit in Dubai, for instance, 50 of the world's largest oil and gas companies committed to eliminating methane emissions altogether by 2030.

"The capabilities of this satellite are phenomenal," says Róisín Commane, an atmospheric scientist at Columbia University in New York City. But she points out that MethaneSAT is limited: each day, it can transmit imagery to Earth from only around 30 swaths of land measuring 200 square kilometres each. That is enough to accomplish its core mission of monitoring global oil and gas operations, as well as some agricultural sources. She has thus proposed putting sensors similar to MethaneSAT's aboard a future NASA satellite, but with more power and a larger radio antenna. "There's an awful lot more to be done," Commane says.

For Wofsy, the big question is whether the data from MethaneSAT will actually push companies and countries to take action. Its operators hold sway over neither industry nor government, but the data showing the methane emissions will be out there in the public sphere, he says. "I hope it's going to make a difference."

Courtesy, Nature

3 terrorists killed in security operation in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, 3 MARCH

At least three wanted terrorists were killed by Pakistani security forces in an operation in the restive northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the army said. A statement from the media wing of the Pakistan Army said the operation that also left four terrorists injured was conducted in the Karak district of Kohat division on prior information about the presence of militants. The forces seized arms and ammunition, as well as explosive materials from the terrorists, the statement said. The terrorists were wanted by the law-enforcing agencies in various incidents of terrorism, it said. *—PTI*

Raye makes history by winning 6 Brit Awards

LONDON, 3 MARCH

It was Raye's night as she made history at the Brit Awards, winning six of the seven prizes she was nominated for - beating Blur, Adele and Harry Styles' record four wins at a single ceremony. She is also the first woman to win songwriter of the year. Collecting her prizes barefoot, she said: "The artist I was three years ago would not believe I'm in control - I'm my own boss." Dua Lipa won best pop act while Kylie Minogue won the global icon award. Miley Cyrus won International Song of the Year for her hugely successful single Flowers, and Jungle won group of the year. The singer-songwriter decided to release them herself, and her song Escapism - which won song of the year - went viral on TikTok and then to number one. Best international artist was won by US singer-songwriter SZA, who managed to beat stars including the mighty Taylor Swift. *—BBC News*

Kuwait to hold parliamentary elections on 4 April

DUBAI, 3 MARCH

Kuwait said Saturday it will hold elections for its national assembly on 4 April, its latest round of voting after years of political turmoil. The state-run KUNA news agency made the announcement, citing a decree published by the oil-rich country's official gazette. In February, Kuwait's emir dissolved parliament after a lawmaker reportedly insulted the ruler. Domestic political disputes have been gripping Kuwait for years — including the overhaul of Kuwait's welfare system — which prevented the sheikhdom from taking on debt. That has left it with little in its coffers to pay bloated public sector salaries, despite generating immense wealth from its oil reserves. Parliament has been repeatedly dissolved after failing to move forward, with Kuwait's Constitutional Court in 2023 annulling a 2022 decree overturning another such annulment. *—AP*

Taiwan detects 21 Chinese aircraft, 6 naval vessels

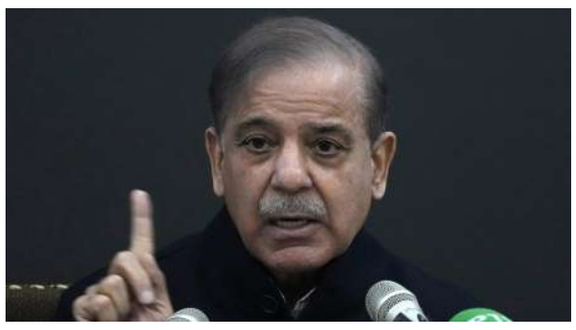
TAIPEI, 3 MARCH

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence has said that it has detected 21 Chinese military aircraft and six naval vessels around Taiwan between 6 am (local time) on Saturday and 6 am (local time) on Sunday, Taiwan News reported. According to Taiwan's MND, among the 21 People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, one Chinese drone crossed the Taiwan Strait median line and entered the southwest corner of Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ). Furthermore, nine PLA aircraft entered the southwest sector of the ADIZ. Following China's action, Taiwan sent aircraft and naval ships and deployed air defence air defence missile to keep a track of the PLA activity, Taiwan News reported. In a post on X, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence stated, "21 PLA aircraft and 6 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 am. 10 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's SW ADIZ. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and employed appropriate forces to respond." *—ANI*

Shehbaz Sharif becomes Pak's PM for 2nd time

Shehbaz thanks allies for putting their trust in him

ISLAMABAD, 3 MARCH



Pakistan new Prime Minister Shehbaz Shariff said Pakistan had a big challenge and opportunity before it *PHOTO:PTI*

Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday became the Prime Minister of Pakistan for a second time to lead a coalition government after he comfortably won a majority in the newly-elected Parliament amidst sloganeering by the Opposition.

Pakistan's newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday thanked his allies in the coalition government for putting their trust in him and making him Leader of the House.

"When my Quaid (leader Nawaz) was elected the prime minister thrice, the development that followed in the country is an example of its own. And it is not wrong to say that Nawaz Sharif is the one who built Pakistan," Shehbaz said in his victory speech.

The 72-year-old PML-N President thanked his elder brother Nawaz and all the allies for putting their trust in him and making him Leader of the House. Shehbaz, who was the consensus candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), received 201 votes in the 336-member house.

Shehbaz's challenger Omar Ayub Khan of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) secured 92 votes. "There are talented people sitting in this Parliament who can steer Pakistan's ship to the shore [...] these include journalists, intellectuals, politicians, religious leaders," he said.

Shehbaz said Pakistan had a big challenge and opportunity before it. "If we come together and decide to change the fate of Pakistan [...] then God willing, we will defeat these challenges and take Pakistan to its rightful position," he said. He highlighted that this job was difficult but not impossible.

"Back to the good old days of development! Onwards and upwards. Nawaz Ka vision, Shehbaz Ka mission," the PML-N said in a post on X along with a picture of both the leaders. "The other name of deliverance is MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF," it said in another post.

The session of the new parliament was convened amid ruckus and sloganeering by PTI-backed lawmakers. In his speech, Shehbaz also said that the nation would always remember the sacrifices of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the founder of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the maternal grandfather of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. *—PTI*

Sarfraz Bugti takes oath as Balochistan Chief Minister

QUETTA, 3 MARCH

Mir Sarfraz Bugti from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has been sworn in as the Chief Minister of Balochistan, following his election earlier today, ARY News reported. Governor Abdul Wali Kakar presided over the swearing-in ceremony at the Governor House in Quetta, attended by PPP chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. PPP's joint candidate with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Sarfraz Bugti, secured 41 votes during the Balochistan Assembly session. *—ANI*

TRIGGER LANDSLIDES

Heavy rains in Pak kill at least 37, buildings collapse

PESHAWAR, 3 MAR

At least 27 people, mostly children, reportedly died in rain-related incidents in Khyber *PHOTO:PTI*

At least 37 people were killed in rain-related incidents across Pakistan in the past 48 hours, authorities said on Sunday. The rains that have swept across Pakistan have led to the collapse of houses and triggered landslides that blocked roads, particularly in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, they said.

At least 27 people, mostly children, reportedly died in rain-related incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan since Thursday night, the provincial disaster management authority said.

As many as 37 people have been injured in the torrential rains that hit ten districts, including Bajaur, Swat, Lower Dir, Malakand, Khyber, Peshawar, North, South Waziristan, and Lakki Marwat, of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the past 48 hours, it said. Chief Minister KPK Ali Amin Gandapur said rain-affected people would not be left alone in this critical hour and would be duly compensated against their damages.

At least five people died in southwestern Balochistan province after floods swamped the coastal town of Gwadar, forcing authorities to use boats to evacuate people.

According to officials, heavy rainfall in Gwadar over the past two days disrupted normal life, rendering hundreds of people homeless.

Casualties and damage were also reported in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the National Disaster Management Authority said, adding that five persons were killed in the region. *—PTI*

Israel eliminates 30 Hamas terrorists in Gaza

TEL AVIV, 3 MARCH

Israeli forces eliminate 30 Hamas terrorists in Central Gaza *PHOTO: ANI*

Israeli ground forces carried out an extensive series of attacks on Hamas targets in western Khan Yunis overnight, the Israel Defence Forces said on Sunday morning.

During the strikes, soldiers eliminated Hamas terrorists operating from civilian facilities in urban areas. The attacks began with a series of air and artillery strikes on approximately 50 targets in six minutes. Among the targets hit were underground terror infrastructure, military structures, anti-tank missile launch posts, rigged structures, and operational meeting points that posed a threat to Israeli troops in the area.

Additionally, over the past day, IDF troops eliminated over 30 terrorists and located weapons in central Gaza. During one of the operational activities in the area, ground forces identified a Hamas squad loading suspected weapons, who approached the troops in the area. *—ANI*

US airdrops thousands of meals into Gaza

WASHINGTON, 3 MAR

US military C-130 cargo planes dropped food in pallets over Gaza on Saturday in the opening stage of an emergency humanitarian assistance authorised by President Joe Biden after more than 100 Palestinians who had surged to pull goods off an aid convoy were killed during a chaotic encounter with Israeli troops. Three planes from Air Forces Central dropped 66 bundles containing about 38,000 meals into Gaza at 8:30 am EST. The bundles were dropped in southwest Gaza, on the beach along the territory's Mediterranean coast *—AP*

MYSTERY OF MH 370

A family member of passengers on board of the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 cries during the tenth annual remembrance event at a shopping mall, in Subang Jaya in Malaysia on Sunday. Ten years ago, a Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, had disappeared on 8 March, 2014 while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with over 200 people on board *PHOTO: PTI*

S Korean doctors hold massive anti-govt rally

SEOUL, 3 MARCH

Thousands of senior doctors rallied in Seoul on Sunday to express their support for junior doctors who have been on strike for nearly two weeks over a government plan to sharply increase the number of medical school admissions.

The rally came as the government said it would begin to take steps Monday to suspend the medical licenses of nearly 9,000 medical interns and residents for defying government orders to end their walkouts, which have disrupted hospital operations. "The government's absurd medical policy has triggered immense resistance by trainee doctors and medical students, and we doctors have become one," Park Sung-min, a senior member of the Korea Medical Association, said in a speech at the rally. "I'm asking the government: Please, stop the threats and suppression now."

Protesters chanted slogans, sang and held placards criticising the government's plan. There were were no reports of any violence at the rally. As of Thursday night, 8,945 of the country's 13,000 medical interns and residents were confirmed to have left their worksites, according to the Health Ministry. The government has repeatedly said they would face minimum three-month license suspensions and indictments by prosecutors if they didn't return by 29 February. The striking doctors are a fraction of 1,40,000 doctors. But they account for about 30-40 per cent of the total doctors at some major hospitals, where they assist senior doctors during surgeries and other treatments while training. Their walkouts have subsequently caused numerous cancellations of surgeries and medical treatments at the hospitals. Senior doctors have staged a series of rallies backing the young doctors but haven't joined the walkouts. If they also launch strikes, that would pose a major blow to medical service. *—AP*

SL's tourism sees 122% growth in Jan 2024 from last year

COLOMBO, 3 MARCH

Siyambalapitiya said the bank figures show that receipts from tourism had fetched USD 342 million *PHOTO: PIXBAY*

A Sri Lankan minister on Sunday said the country's external sector performance has seen a marked improvement year on year with tourism fetching $342 million in January 2024, an impressive 122 per cent jump from last year.

Speaking in Ruwanwella, his home constituency, Minister of State for Finance Ranjith Siyambalapitiya was delving into the Central Bank of Sri Lanka's external sector indicators issued mid-week. Siyambalapitiya said the bank figures show that receipts from tourism had fetched USD 342 million, which is a 122 per cent growth in January 2024 year on year.

The inward remittances from Sri Lankan expats in January 2024 had grown by five per cent to USD 488 million up from USD 467 million in January 2023. The Sri Lankan rupee, which had seen a massive slump during the unprecedented economic crisis, had appreciated by 14.6 per cent in January of this year. The foreign reserves had increased to USD 4.5 billion in January up 114 per cent from USD 2.1 billion in January 2023. The economy recorded positive growth in the third quarter of 2023 after six successive quarters of negative growth, Siyambalapitiya said. Sri Lanka in the second quarter of 2022 had declared bankruptcy announcing the island's first ever sovereign default. Negotiations with the IMF for a bailout began almost immediately and the first tranche of the USD 2.9 billion facility was released in March 2023.

The finance ministry officials said the IMF officials are due this week to carry out its second review after which the third tranche of the facility could be released by around June. *—PTI*

Election 2024: Trump wins Missouri, Idaho caucuses

COLUMBIA, 3 MARCH

Former US presidnet Donald Trump *PHOTO: PTI*

- Trump earned every delegate at stake on Saturday, bringing his count to 244 compared to 24 for former UN ambassador Nikki Haley

Former president Donald Trump continued his march toward the GOP nomination on Saturday, winning caucuses in Idaho and Missouri and sweeping the delegate haul at a party convention in Michigan.

Trump earned every delegate at stake on Saturday, bringing his count to 244 compared to 24 for former UN ambassador Nikki Haley. A candidate needs to secure 1,215 delegates to clinch the Republican nomination. The next event on the Republican calendar is Sunday in the District of Columbia. Two days later is Super Tuesday, when 16 states will hold primaries on what will be the largest day of voting of the year outside of the November election. Trump is on track to lock up the nomination days later.

The steep odds facing Haley were on display in Columbia, Missouri, where Republicans gathered at a church to caucus. Seth Christensen stood on stage received.

Another caucusgoer shouted out from the audience: "Are you a Republican?" An organizer quieted the crowd and Christensen finished his speech. Haley went on to win just 37 of the 263 Republicans in attendance in Boone County. Michigan Republicans at their convention in Grand Rapids began allocating 39 of the state's 55 GOP presidential delegates. Trump won all 39 delegates allocated. But a significant portion of the party's grassroots force was skipping the gathering because of the lingering effects of a monthslong dispute over the party's leadership. *—AP*

POLITICAL TURMOIL

Haiti: Hundreds of prisoners escape Port-au-Prince prison

PORT-AU-PRINCE, 3 MARCH

Haitian gang leader Jimmy Cherizier, also known as Barbecue, said he would continue to oust Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry *PHOTO: ANI*

Hundreds of prisoners have escaped from Haiti's National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince, after fighting erupted on Saturday, CNN reported citing a law enforcement source.

In a post on X, one of Haiti's Police Unions pleaded for all officers in the capital with access to cars and weapons to support police fighting to have control over the penitentiary. They warned that if the attackers were successful "we are done. No one will be spared in the capital because there will be 3,000 extra bandits now effective," according to the statement.

The most recent rise in violence, which started on Thursday and has targeted police stations, the international airport and the National Penitentiary, is unprecedented in recent years, CNN reported citing multiple security sources in Port-au-Prince.

On Friday, Haitian gang leader Jimmy Cherizier, also known as Barbecue, said he would continue to make efforts to try and oust Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry, according to CNN report.

Cherizier said, "We ask the Haitian National Police and the military to take responsibility and arrest Ariel Henry. Once again, the population is not our enemy; the armed groups are not your enemy. You arrest Ariel Henry for the country's liberation." He added, "With these weapons, we will liberate the country, and these weapons will change the country."

Jimmy Cherizier, a former police officer, who heads an alliance of gangs, has faced sanctions from the US Department of Treasury and the United Nations, CNN reported. People in Haiti disappointed over Henry's inability to control the unrest, boiled over after he did not step down in February, citing the escalating violence.

Under a previous agreement, Ariel Henry had announced to hold elections and transfer power by 7 February. On Wednesday, Caribbean leaders said that Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry had agreed to hold general elections no later than 31 August, 2025. *—ANI*

Vedanta Resources to deleverage debt by $3B over 3 years

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Vedanta Resources, the parent firm of Mumbai-based mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd, does not foresee a rollover of its loans and plans to deleverage as much as USD 3 billion debt over the next three years, a senior official said at an analyst meeting. "Deleveraging is our priority. We would be deleveraging the debt of Vedanta Resources by USD 3 billion over the next three years. Vedanta Ltd's cash flow pre-growth capex is estimated to be USD 3.5-4 billion for the financial year 2025, sufficient for secured debt maturities of USD 1.5 billion," said Navin Agarwal, Vice Chairman, Vedanta Ltd and member of Promoter Group, at a recently concluded analysts' meet, according to analysts who attended the meeting. *—PTI*

Godrej & Boyce to expand in smaller cities, invest ₹40cr

MUMBAI, 3 MARCH

Godrej & Boyce is aiming to invest about Rs 40 crore over the next three years to expand its distribution footprint for its consumer brands in the tier-II and tier-III cities.The fresh investments by the company, which sells interior solutions, furniture, appliances and locks, will see its footprint getting doubled to more than 400 towns by FY27, a senior official has said."G&B plans to spend around Rs 10-15 crore every year on store expansion and renovation for the next three years," a company spokesperson told PTI. The company is targeting to grow its topline by 15-20 per cent per year, and it hopes for the store expansion to be one among several initiatives to realise its aim, the spokesperson added. When asked if the expansion activities will be franchisee-driven, the spokesperson said the store expansion will be both "company and channel-driven". As per the company website, it had revenues of Rs 14,796 crore in FY23 and was present in over ten industries, including delivering engineering solutions, manufacturing consumer appliances, furniture, locks and security solutions. *—PTI*

Wardwizard to focus in domestic, int'l markets

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Electric vehicle maker Wardwizard Innovations & Mobility is planning to expand operations as it looks to cater to enhanced demand in both domestic and international markets, Chairman and Managing Director Yatin Gupte said. The Vadodara-based company is setting up a new assembly plant in Sharjah in the UAE to cater to African markets, including Egypt.It has also set up an assembly plant in Deoghar, Jharkhand to cater to the growing demand for electric vehicles (EVs) in markets like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha.In an interaction with PTI, Gupte said the company is setting up the assembly plant in Sharjah in collaboration with the BEEAH Group. *—PTI*

PK Basumatary appointed new head of Guwahati Refinery

GUWAHATI, 3 MARCH

The Guwahati Refinery, owned by Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), on Sunday said Pradip Kumar Basumatary has taken charge as the chief general manager and refinery head following the superannuation of GK Goyari. Basumatary, a mechanical engineering graduate from Assam Engineering College, took charge on 1 March, the company said in a statement.Prior to the new role, Basumatary was the chief general manager (technical) at the Guwahati Refinery. He has been instrumental in augmenting Guwahati Refinery's capacity to 1.2 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) in 2023 and synchronising the operation with 132-KV grid power of the state government, the statement said. *—PTI*

'INDIA TO BE BIGGEST CHIP MAKER IN 5 YEARS'

India eyes to step up the manufacturing value chain

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

India will, in next five years, join the high-stake global stage of semiconductor manufacturing as it combines unparalleled design capabilities with USD 10 billion of incentives to draw manufacturers to set up new fabs and units that will cut dominance of Taiwan, South Korea and China, said IT and Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

He said India's well-crafted policies are tempting manufacturers to set up new fabs (semiconductor fabrication plants) and pouring investment in related sectors. Semiconductors are an essential component of electronic devices, and are used in automobiles to computers, mobile phones and even washing machines.India already has factories of best known automobile companies -- from Renault-Nissan to Hyundai, computer makers such as Dell, Apple suppliers and electronic makers like Samsung which produce TVs, washing machines and fridges, among others.

Ashwini Vaishnaw said the country already has roughly one-third of global design talent *PHOTO: PTI*

Now, India is eyeing to step up the manufacturing value chain with a high-stake semiconductor manufacturing. Centre's Rs 76,000 crore of incentives have got four players including Micron and Tatas.

Vaishnaw said the country already has roughly one-third of global design talent.Government is leveraging this and India's geopolitical clout to become an indispensable partner for tech ambitions of the US, which like other western economies, is looking to decouple their supply chains from China.

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's Rs 76,000 crore of incentives have got four players including Micron and Tatas**

Beijig's draconian lockdowns had disrupted global chip supply and sent companies and governments on a hunt for alternatives.India is offering itself as a democratic and trusted alternative tech hub to China.

"People who were earlier thinking when should we go to India or should we go to India...now they are asking how soon do we go to India...that is the change which is happening. This means, practically every big player would now like to reconsider their investment plans and come to India," he said.

The semiconductor plans will make India self-reliant, trigger a multiplier effect on economy and various industries, create job and spur livelihoods.As per the announcements, Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd will set up a semiconductor fab in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp at Dholera's special industrial region in Gujarat.

The plant will have the capacity to produce 50,000 wafers per month and involve an investment of Rs 91,000 crore.

Notably, this will be India's first semiconductor unit in the northeast. *—PTI*

TCS, ICICI BANK BIG GAINERS

Mcap of 7 of top 10 firms climb ₹65,302cr

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

The combined market valuation of seven of the top 10 most valued firms climbed Rs 65,302.5 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and ICICI Bank emerging as the biggest gainers.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 663.35 points or 0.90 per cent, and the Nifty jumped 165.7 points or 0.74 per cent.

Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE conducted a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on Saturday to check their preparedness to handle major disruption or failure at the primary site.

From the top-10 pack, TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the gainers, while Reliance Industries, Infosys and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LICI) faced erosion from their market capitalisation (mcap).The market valuation of TCS climbed Rs 19,881.39 crore to Rs 14,85,912.36 crore.

ICICI Bank added Rs 15,672.82 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 7,60,481.54 crore.Market valuation of State Bank of India jumped Rs 12,182.1 crore to Rs 6,89,917.13 crore, and that of HDFC Bank rallied Rs 7,178.03 crore to Rs 10,86,464.53 crore.

ICICI Bank added Rs 15.6cr taking its valuation to Rs 7.60cr *PHOTO: PTI*

- **The market valuation of TCS climbed Rs 19,881.39 crore to Rs 14,85,912.36 crore.**

The mcap of Hindustan Unilever went up by Rs 5,051.63 crore to Rs 5,67,626.01 crore, and that of Bharti Airtel climbed Rs 4,525.14 crore to Rs 6,38,721.77 crore.

In the ranking of the most valued companies, Reliance Industries continued to lead the pack, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC. *—PTI*

FPIs reverse trend; inject ₹1.5cr into Indian equities in February

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Foreign investors made a significant turnaround and injected over Rs 1,500 crore into Indian equities in February, reversing the massive outflows seen in the preceding month, primarily due to robust corporate earnings and positive economic growth.

Additionally, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) continued to be bullish on the debt markets as they put in over Rs 22,419 crore during the month under review, data with the depositories showed.

Looking ahead to March, the outlook for FPI flow appears promising, provided the current economic trajectory and corporate performance sustain their positive momentum, potentially continuing to attract foreign investment into Indian equities, Mayank Mehraa, smallcase manager and principal partner at Craving Alpha, said.

According to the data, FPIs invested a net sum of Rs 1,539 crore in the Indian equities in February. This came following a net withdrawal of Rs 25,743 crore in January.The latest influx can be attributed to robust corporate earnings and positive economic growth trends observed during the December quarter.

The latest influx can be attributed to robust corporate earnings and positive economic growth trend *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

Despite perceived stretched valuations in the previous month, the compelling performance of companies justified their value, enticing FPIs to re-enter the market, Mehraa said.

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said that improvement in the global economic environment would have prompted FPIs to invest in high growth-oriented markets like India.Globally, the January inflation numbers in the US were in line with expectations. Though the prices moved up in January, the annual increase in inflation was the lowest in nearly three years, raising expectation of an early rate cut by US Federal Reserve.

On the domestic front too, Q3 GDP data showed strong growth, thus attracting foreign investors, he added. *—PTI*

'India-UAE non-oil trade could hit $100B by 2030'

ABU DHABI, 3 MARCH

The target of USD 100 billion non-oil trade between India and the UAE by 2030 is ambitious but achievable as huge business opportunities are there in both the nations for sectors such as textiles, jewellery and pharma, CII President R Dinesh said on Sunday.

He said that the free trade agreement between India and the UAE, which was implemented in May 2022, has resulted in a surge in bilateral trade and investments.

Dinesh was here to participate in global investors' event 'Investopia' and various bilateral meetings, including with many participants at the WTO (World Trade Organisation) Ministerial Conference.

"The target to achieve USD 100 billion in non-oil trade between India and UAE is ambitious but I do believe that it is achievable and recent developments are encouraging in this regard," the CII president told PTI here.

He said that the agreement, officially dubbed as comprehensive economic partnership agreement, covers duty-free access to all labour-intensive sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles and apparel, leather, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and many engineering products.

The bilateral trade has already touched USD 84.9 billion in 2022-23, and India is now the UAE's top non-oil trading partner.

"India's vast consumer base and growing manufacturing capabilities offer an attractive market for UAE goods, while the UAE's status as a global trade hub facilitates Indian export access to international markets," he said.The UAE is a major supplier of crude oil to India. Oil shipments account for a major share of bilateral trade between the countries.

The pact, he said, also paves the way for both Indian and UAE companies to come together to be part of global supply chains and encourage manufacturing in both countries. He added that joint ventures and technology transfers would enhance production, leading to diversification and value addition. *—PTI*

ON RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

REA India's revenue rises 21% in Jul-Dec

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Revenue of REA India -- owner of Housing.com and PropTiger -- rose 21 per cent to Rs 238 crore during latest July-December period on strong demand of residential properties, its CEO Dhruv Agarwala said. The company would continue to invest in new products, technologies and branding-marketing activities to further grow its business and establish a significant lead against competitors, he said.

REA India, which is part of Australia's publicly listed firm REA, is a full-stack real estate technology firm and owns two online classified advertisement platforms Housing.com and Makaan.com as well as housing brokerage PropTiger.Agarwala said the company posted a 21 per cent growth in revenue to 44 million Australian dollars (nearly Rs 240 crore) during July-December period of the 2023-24 fiscal year ending June.He highlighted that revenue from its core business, advertising and housing brokerage, grew 32 per cent to AUD 32 million.

During the July-December period, the web traffic on Housing.com rose 5 per cent annually and was 1.2 times than the closest competitor. *—PTI*

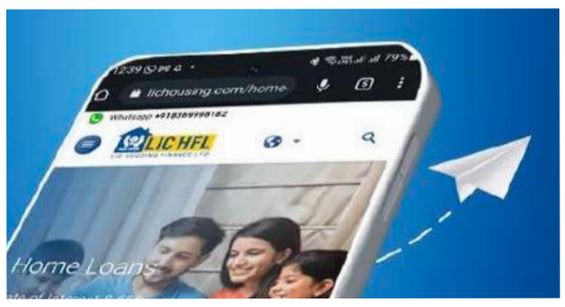
LIC Fin plans to raise funds via green bonds

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

LIC Housing Finance, the mortgage arm of insurance behemoth LIC, plans to mobilise funds through green bonds in the coming financial year with an aim to finance environmentally-sustainable housing projects.

"Green financing is something that we will look at the next year and we would deploy the fund for financing green housing projects," LIC Housing Finance MD and CEO Tribhuwan Adhikari told PTI in an interaction.

LIC Housing Finance will have its board meeting on 7 March to consider and approve the borrowing plan for 2024-2025 through loans or issue of redeemable non-convertible debentures, zero couponed bonds, subordinate debt, Tier II bonds or any other means approved by the regulator.Adhikari said the company hopes to hit the net profit of Rs 5,000 crore-milestone by the end of current financial year. The non-core businesses include Loan Against Property and affordable housing finance, he said.



The ccompany hopes to hit the net profit of Rs 5,000 crore-milestone by the end of current financial year *PHOTO: X*

"Affordable housing segment remained strong in tier-2 and tier-3 markets. We remained focused on this segment, as it gives an opportunity to millions of aspiring Indians to own their home with a moderate budget," he said. *—PTI*

Solar installations rise 6.25%

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Rooftop solar capacity addition saw a 6.25 per cent growth to 1.7 gigawatt in 2023, supported by various factors like reduced installation cost, according to Mercom Capital.

The rooftop capacity addition was at 1.6 gigawatt (GW) in 2022, the US-based research firm said in its latest report.

In October-December 2023, 406 megawatts (MW) of rooftop solar was added, down 15.9 per cent from 483 MW in the last quarter of 2022, the 'Mercom India Rooftop Solar Market Report' said.

Cumulative rooftop solar installations reached 10.5 GW at the end of December 2023.

Residential installations were the primary driver of capacity additions in 2023. However, growth was marginal as many commercial and industrial (C&I) consumers waited for module prices to stabilise to lower their capital investments.

The residential segment accounted for over half of the capacity additions in 2023, followed by C&I segments.Rooftop solar tenders totalling 1.2 GW were issued in 2023, down 45.7 per cent year-on-year. Uttar Pradesh New Energy Development Agency drove tender activity in 2023, accounting for 44.2 per cent of announced tender capacity, the report said.Tenders to add rooftop solar systems on government buildings across India accounted for nearly 57 per cent of the announced total solar tender capacity.

Gujarat was the leader in installation, accounting for 27.3 per cent of cumulative solar rooftop installations, followed by Maharashtra and Rajasthan, with 13.3 per cent and 8.1 per cent share, respectively. *—PTI*

HIGHWAY TO ILL-HEALTH

Paan, tobacco, consumption upped in last 10 years

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Consumption of paan, tobacco and other intoxicants has increased with people spending a bigger portion of their income on such products in the last 10 years, according to a survey.

The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23, released last week, revealed that the expenditure on paan, tobacco and intoxicants as a portion of total household spending has increased in rural as well as urban areas.

The data showed that the expenditure on these items has increased to 3.79 per cent in 2022-23 in rural areas from 3.21 per cent in 2011-12.

Similarly, in urban areas, the spending grew from 1.61 per cent in 2011-12 to 2.43 per cent in 2022-23. The proportion of spending on education has reduced to 5.78 per cent in urban areas in 2022-23 from 6.90 per cent in 2011-12.

In rural areas, this proportion has come down to 3.30 per cent in 2022-23 from 3.49 per cent in 2011-12.

The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, conducted the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) from August 2022 to July 2023.

Expenditure on paan, tobacco as a portion of total household spending increased in rural as well as urban areas *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

Beverages and processed food also see a hike

This survey on household consumption expenditure aims at measuring estimates of each household's Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) and its distribution separately for the rural and urban sectors of the country, for states and Union Territories, and different socio-economic groups.

The survey also stated that spending on beverages and processed food has increased to 10.64 per cent in urban areas in 2022-23 from 8.98 per cent in 2011-12.

In rural areas, it increased from 7.90 per cent in 2011-12 to 9.62 per cent in 2022-23. The spending on conveyance also rose from 6.52 per cent in 2011-12 to 8.59 per cent in 2022-23 in urban areas. It also climbed in rural areas from 4.20 per cent in 2011-12 to 7.55 per cent in 2022-23.

According to the study, the MPCE more than doubled during the period from 2011-12 to 2022-23. The average MPCE at current prices (without imputation) more than doubled to Rs 6,459 in urban areas in 2022-23 from Rs 2,630 in 2011-12. *—PTI*

INDIA'S USED CAR MARKET SIZE TO TOUCH $100B-MARK BY 2034: CARS24

NEW DELHI, 3 MARCH

Indian used car market is expected to touch the USD 100 billion-mark in the next ten years on the back of rising disposable incomes and a growing middle class, according to CARS24 Co-Founder and CEO Vikram Chopra.

As per the findings of the Gurugram-based online used car marketplace, there are changes in market dynamics with customers opting for frequent upgrades when it comes to cars.

"According to our internal study, the anticipated growth of the Indian used car market is set to occur at a 15 per cent CAGR, increasing from USD 25 billion in 2023 to USD 100 billion by 2034," Chopra told PTI in an interaction.

The growth trajectory is propelled by various factors unique to the Indian market, including urbanisation and a growing middle class, which is changing consumer preferences and boosting the demand for affordable mobility solutions, he added.

Chopra noted that when CARS24 began its journey eight years ago, the used car market size stood at around USD 10-15 billion.

The car ownership in the country remains low as compared to various developed geographies, Chopra said.

In the US and China or in Europe, 80-90 per cent of the population has a car while in India only around 8 per cent of the population owns a four-wheeler, he added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: IANS

Advani tames Kamal Chawla to retain title

MUMBAI, 3 MAR

Reigning champion Pankaj Advani reasserted his dominance and retained his crown as he produced another virtuoso performance to hand challenger Kamal Chawla an 8-3 defeat in the best-of-15-frame final of the Rs 12.5 lakh prizemoney CCI Snooker Classic 2024 here on Sunday.Advani cruised to a 75-12, 1-58, 64-39, 63-29, 7-75, 66-64, 94-5, 0-81, 64-47, 122-8, and 72-9 victory against Kamal Chawla in the final of the event organized by the Cricket Club of India and played at the CCI's Sir Wilson Jones Billiards Hall. India's most decorated sportsperson, Advani showcased his prowess on the green baize as he potted with a high degree of accuracy and consistency.I credit my opponent Kamal (Chawla), he played some fantastic snooker.—*PTI*

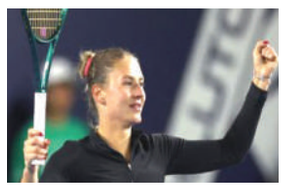


PHOTO: IANS

Kostyuk knocks out top seed Pegula, faces Boulter in final

PRAGUE, 3 MAR

Sixth-seeded Marta Kostyuk fought off an early deficit on Saturday to beat top seed Jessica Pegula 7-6(4), 6-1, and reach the final of the San Diego Open, a WTA 500 event. With the surprise comeback, Kostyuk, of Ukraine, moved into Sunday's final where she will face qualifier Katie Boulter, who bested third-seeded Emma Navarro 6-3, 6-1 in the other semifinal match. After Pegula jumped out to a 5-1 lead in the first set, Kostyuk tossed her racquet in disgust twice. But she regained her composure and went on to capture the next four games, breaking Pegula's serve to knot the score 5-5.—*AP*

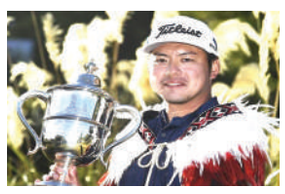


PHOTO: IANS

Hataji wins New Zealand Open for 1st professional title

QUEENSTOWN, 3 MAR

Takahiro Hataji won his first professional tournament and became the first Japanese player to win the New Zealand Golf Open Sunday when he took out the 103rd edition of the event at the Millbrook Resort.Hataji shot a flawless 4-under final round of 67 for a four-round total of 17-under-par to win by a stroke from Australian Scott Hend.Hend came to the 72nd hole tied with Hataji in first place. —*AP*

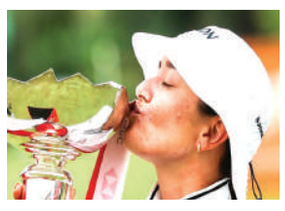


PHOTO: PTI

Aditi finishes 21st in Singapore, Green wins the title

SINGAPORE, 3 MAR

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok finished 21st at the women's World Championship with a final card of 2-under 70 here on Sunday after being in top-10 in the first two days. Australia's Hannah Green, shot her third straight 67 after 74 start in the first round, to total 13-under and win the title one shot clear of French golfer, Celine Boutier (67).A week ago Aditi was T-31 at the Honda LPGA. Aditi, a five-time Ladies European Tour winner.—*AP*

Shardul-led Mumbai's rearguard puts Tamil Nadu on the mat

Himanshu Mantri hundred gives MP an edge over Vidarbha

MUMBAI, 3 MAR

Shardul Thakur's sizzling 109 and Tanush Kotian's unbeaten 74 offset R Sai Kishore's six-wicket haul, putting Mumbai in command by powering them to a 207-run first-innings lead over Tamil Nadu on the second day of the Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Sunday.

Thakur's sensational counter-attacking hundred, featuring 13 fours and four sixes from a mere 104 balls, pulled Mumbai out of the doldrums after they were reduced to 106 for seven at one stage. Mumbai were 353 for 9 at stumps against TN's first innings' 146, with Sai Kishore causing the maximum damage.

Sai Kishore (6/97) ran through a chunk of Mumbai's batting line-up, while Shreyas Iyer (3) fell to pacer Sandeep Warrier as TN leveled up with the hosts for the first time in the game.

But Thakur launched a stunning onslaught, putting each of the TN bowlers under severe pressure while forging vital partnerships along the way to take Mumbai far ahead in the game.Thakur teamed up with Hardik Tamore (35) for a crucial 105-run stand for the eighth wicket and took Mumbai further ahead in the company of Kotian, adding another 79 runs for the ninth wicket.

Thakur, who also struggled with an ankle-related issue along the way, finally fell to Kuldeep Sen (2/65) in the third session, which brought the pair of Kotian and Tushar Deshpande together again after their heroics in the last match.

"We (got) bogged down a little in the first session. There was not too much happening today in the pitch and I felt batsmen should have played with some kind of freedom to start within the first innings," he told the media after the end of play here.

Brief scores: Tamil Nadu 146 trail Mumbai 353/9 in 100 overs (Shardul Thakur 109, Tanush Kotian 74 not out; R Sai Kishore 6/97) by 207 runs.

Himanshu Mantri showed patience and technical aptitude while constructing a fine hundred to singlehandedly guide Madhya Pradesh to 252 in their first innings against Vidarbha on the second day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Sunday.

Mantri's 126 off 265 balls (13x4, 1x6) helped Madhya Pradesh to gain a small yet significant 82-run lead after beginning the day at 47 for one.

In their second innings, Vidarbha reached 13 for the loss of Atharva Taide at stumps, trailing by 69 runs.

The importance of Mantri's knock, his third hundred of the season, can be gauged from the fact that the next highest score in MP innings was a 30 by Saransh Jain.

But in the morning session, Madhya Pradesh made a steady start through Mantri and Harsh Gawli as the second wicket pair stretched their alliance to 61 as Vidarbha reached 81 for one.

Brief Scores:
Vidarbha: 170 and 13/1
Madhya Pradesh 1st innings: 252 all out in 94.3 overs (Himanshu Mantri 126, Saransh Jain 30; Umesh Yadav 3/40, Yash Thakur 3/51, Akshay Wakhare 2/68). —*PTI*

Shardul Thakur PHOTO: PTI

RANJI TROPHY

Himanshu Mantri scored the third hundred of the season PHOTO: PTI

Nathan Lyon was Australia's matchwinner on the fourth day PHOTO: TWITTER

Australia beat NZ by 172 runs in the first test

WELLINGTON, 3 MAR

Spinner Nathan Lyon took six for 65 as Australia dismissed New Zealand for 196 before lunch on the fourth day of the first test at Wellington's Basin Reserve on Sunday to win the match by 172 runs and go 1-0 up in the series.

New Zealand had started the day on 111-3 chasing a daunting victory target of 369, but Lyon sent back Rachin Ravindra for 59 and also removed Tom Blundell and Glenn Phillips inside the first hour to claim his 24th test five-wicket haul.

Daryl Mitchell and Scott Kuggeleijn offered some resistance for the seventh wicket but all-rounder Cameron Green, whose 174 not out with the bat in the first innings was instrumental to Australia's success, dismissed the latter for 26. Mitchell batted on to make 38 despite taking a blow to the helmet from a Green delivery but ran out of partners as the New Zealand tail folded in the face of Australia's attack.

The defeat leaves New Zealand with only one win in 24 tests against their neighbors this century ahead of the second and final match in the series in Christchurch starting on Friday.

Pucovski suffers a concussion after taking a blow on the head

Australian batter Will Pucovski suffered a nasty blow on his head and had to be substituted while playing for Victoria in a Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania here on Sunday.

Pucovski PHOTO: X

The No. 3 batter retired hurt for 0 after being hit on his helmet by a Riley Meredith bouncer. It was just the second delivery he faced in Victoria's chase of 442 in the second innings.

The 26-year-old, who has experienced several blows to the head with the most recent being in a second XI match in January, was struck on the left side of his helmet after he turned his head to a rising delivery from Meredith.

The blow left him visibly disturbed as he kneeled on the pitch. The medical staff rushed to the center. He eventually got up and slowly walked off the field, rubbing his eyes.

"Will is currently in the hands of our medical professionals," a Cricket Victoria spokesperson said. "We'll look to provide an update in due course."

Reserve batter Campbell Kellaway came in as a concussion substitute.

Australia 383 (Green 174*, Henry 5-70) and 164 (Lyon 41, Phillips 5-45) beat New Zealand 179 (Phillips 71, Lyon 4-43) and 196 (Ravindra 59, Lyon 6-65) by 172 runs. —*AP*

Lanning fashions DC's easy 25-run win over GG

BENGALURU, 3 MAR

Captain Meg Lanning's fifty and a cunning spell of left-arm spin by Jess Jonassen drove Delhi Capitals to a slick 25-run victory over Gujarat Giants in their Women's Premier League match here on Sunday.

Lanning (55, 41b, 6x4, 1x6) was the Capitals' guiding force to an adequate 163 for eight despite a late flurry of wickets.

The Giants' chase never grew wings, ending up with 138 for eight despite Ashleigh Gardner's well-timed 40 off 31 balls as they crashed to their fourth defeat on the bounce.

Jonassen led the Capitals' bowling with a shrewd spell (3/22) and she received very good support from Radha Yadav (3/20). The win also propelled Delhi to the top of the table with six points.

Meg Lanning slams her fourth WPL half-century PHOTO: PTI

The Gujarat side made a shaky start, conceding a maiden in the very first over to WPL debutant pacer Titas Sadhu.

Their beginning was further marred when experienced pacer Shikha Pandey castled Laura Wolvaardt with a delivery that shaped in that tiny bit to beat her swat.

But the Giants too found some flow as captain Beth Mooney and Phoebe Litchfield combined to smash 15 runs in the fourth over bowled by Pandey.

However, it was just an isolated spark as the Giants stumbled against Jonassen. In the fifth over, the Australian spinner jettisoned Mooney and Litchfield in the space of four balls to reduce Giants to 34 for three. —*PTI*

INDIA CLIMBS TO THE TOP SPOT IN WTC STANDINGS

DUBAI, 3 MAR

Two-time finalists India jumped to the top of the World Test Championship standings, replacing New Zealand in the latest rankings issued on Sunday.India, who defeated England by five wickets in the fourth Test in Ranchi to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series, replaced the Kiwis with a stronger points percentage of 64.58.With five wins, two losses and one draw, India have 62 points in 8 matches, while the Black Caps have 36 from five matches (three wins, two losses) and have a point percentage of 60.00. Before the start of the Wellington Test, New Zealand was sitting at the top of the table with 36 points in four games and a points percentage of 75.But following their massive 172-run defeat, the 2021WTC champions lost the top spot, slipping to the No. 2 position with a points percentage of 60. Third-placed Australia have closed on the gap after the Wellington Test, gaining 12 crucial points as they now have 78 points from 11 matches (seven wins, three losses, and one draw). —*AP*

Luton's brave comeback falls short against Villa

BENGALURU, 3 MAR

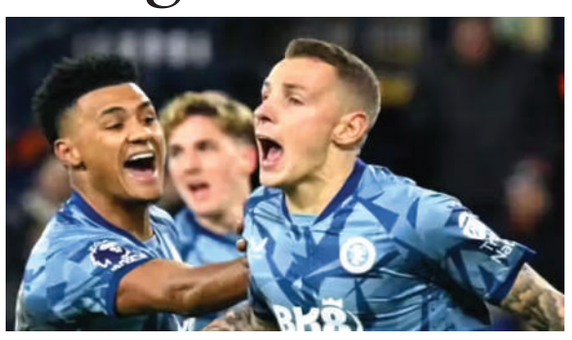
Aston Villa striker Ollie Watkins continued his dream run in the ongoing Premier League season.Watkins scored a brace as Villa edged past Luton Town in a 5-goal thriller on matchday 27.

Villa won 3-2 and remain fourth.With his output, Watkins has gone on to attain a host of feats. Here we bring you the same.

Indeed, but for some decent saves by Thomas Kaminski, the deficit could have been 3 or 4-0. But a superb half-time team talk and changing a few player positions saw Luton Town come out like a different team.With the momentum growing Aston Villa were pegged back with two goals in approximately five minutes, with Chong stabbing the ball home from close range and Morris meeting a superb free kick from Doughty to slot the ball home.

Aston Villa looked rattled, and it only looked to be a matter of time before the Hatters hit the winner. But 'Lady Luck' wasn't looking down on us and Digne ghosted in at the far post to hand the visitors the three points and leave the Hatters faithful stunned into silence.

Before that late, late winner, it looked very much as if my pre-match forecast of a draw was going to be correct, but such is life.Although gutted by how the game ended, overall, Luton Town is in no worse a position than before the game started with two of those teams, we're hoping to drag into the relegation battle, Everton and Nottingham Forest also losing at home. —*AP*



Aston Villa striker Ollie Watkins PHOTO: AFP

AIFF's legal head accuses President Chaubey of corruption

MUMBAI, 3 MAR

The All India Football Federation AIFF on Sunday terminated the services of its principal legal advisor Nilanjan Bhattacharjee after he made serious corruption allegations against President Kalyan Chaubey, who had termed them baseless. In a letter written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, Bhattacharjee said Chaubey worked out corruption avenues through non-transparent tender process and preferential allotment of tender. Chaubey had said that he would reply legally...

Kalyan Chaubey PHOTO:PTI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Sunday terminated the services of its principal legal advisor Nilanjan Bhattacharjee after he made serious "corruption allegations" against president Kalyan Chaubey, who had termed them "baseless".

In a letter written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, Bhattacharjee said Chaubey worked out "corruption avenues" through a non-transparent tender process and preferential allotment of tender.

Chaubey had said that he would "reply legally".

"... inform you of the AIFF's decision to terminate your engagement as principal legal advisor with immediate effect," AIFF acting secretary general M Satyanarayan wrote in the termination letter on Sunday. —*PTI*

Deepak, Narender make opening round exit

BUSTO ARSIZIO, 3 MAR

India's campaign at the first World OlympicBoxing Qualifier was off to a disappointing start with Deepak Bhoria (51kg) andNarender Berwal (+92kg) making opening round exits here on Sunday.

World Champion ships bronze medallist Bhoria lost via a 2-3 split verdict to Azerbaijan's Huseynov Nijat while Berwal was outpunched by 2022 European champion Nelvie Tiafack of Germany 0-5.Boxers whofail to earn quotas here will get one final chance to seal their passage to theParis Games during the second World Olympic Boxing Qualifier, scheduled in Bangkok from 23 to May 3 June. The first tworounds saw a tight contest between Bhoria and Nijtat as both the boxers wentinto attacking mode from the word go. The young pugilist from Azerbaijan tookfull advantage of his pace and swift movements to make life difficult forBhoria in the ring. —*AP*

India started their campaign on a disappointing note as seasoned boxer Deepak Bhoria secured a narrow defeat PHOTO: AFP

PREMIER LEAGUE

Bournemouth push Burnley closer to relegation

BURNLEY, 3 MAR

Bournemouth pushed struggling Burnley closer to relegation from the Premier League with a 2-0 win at Turf Moor on Sunday.

Andoni Iraola's side inflicted Burnley's 20th defeat in 27 league games this season thanks to Justin Kluivert's early goal and Antoine Semenyo's strike in the closing minutes.

While Bournemouth sit comfortably 11 points above the relegation zone after their first league win in 2024, Burnley are languishing in 19th place.

The Clarets are 11 points from safety and look destined for an immediate return to the Championship after last season's promotion.

Vincent Kompany's men are without a win in 10 games in all competitions, losing their last four and conceding 13 goals in the process.

They have lost 11 of their 14 home league games and once again appeared out of their depth despite a determined effort on a chilly afternoon in Lancashire.

Burnley should have taken an early lead when Wilson Odobert shot straight at Bournemouth keeper Neto from Lorenz Assignon's cross.

Bournemouth suffered a blow when defender Marcos Senesi limped off with a hamstring injury

But in the 13th minute, Bournemouth exposed Burnley's vulnerability at the back.

A long ball from Lewis Cook was seized on by Kluivert, who cut inside Dara O'Shea before lashing his shot past James Trafford.

Burnley got in behind the Bournemouth defense in the 41st minute, but Neto came out sharply to deny David Datro Fofana, with Jacob Bruun Larsen's follow-up bravely blocked by Adam Smith.

Bournemouth nearly doubled their lead in the 56th minute when Kluivert broke free down the left and crossed for Solanke, who was denied by a good save from Trafford.

Burnley thought they had equalized in the 66th minute, but Josh Cullen's close-range effort was disallowed for a foul by Larsen on Smith. —*AP*

Bournemouth celebrates PHOTO: AFP